THE

SPIRIT OF THE ELBE:

A ROMANCE.

WOHER DIESE TÖNE?—DIESE GESTALT?
MEIN EIGNER BRUDER

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE SPIRIT OF THE ELBE.

CHAP. I.

" O yonge lyon, but tender yet of age,
" Grow and encreaſe, remembre thyn eſtate,
" God thee aſſyſt unto thyn herytage,
" And geve thee grace to be more fortunate,
" Agayn rebellyones arme to make debate,
" And, as the lyon, whiche is of beſtes kynge,
" Unto thy ſubjectes be curteis and benynge."

SKELTON.

THE ſun had been two hours ſet; and the cold dews of the autumn, ſtealing on, the revellers left the park, and were thronging into the illuminated chambers, juſt as Sigiſmund and his companions were entering the hall. The Ducheſs perceiving him, preſſed through the crowd, and ſeizing his arm, dragged him from the ſide of de Solignac, crying, " Come along; you ſhall be my partner; we are going to dance!" He followed her reſiſtleſs till they entered the ball-room.

The ſets were forming faſt; and the Ducheſs, in triumph, led her priſoner to the top. The muſic began. "Now," ſaid ſhe, holding out her hand; "begin."—"What?" cried he, ſtarting from an uneaſy reverie, into which he had been plunged: "To dance," whiſpered ſhe, and again held out her hand. "You muſt excuſe me, madam," ſaid he, bowing, and turning from her. "Then where you go, I will go," replied ſhe; and putting her arm through his, obeyed the uneaſy ſwiftneſs of his ſteps; till wearied by his own emotions, and her indecent importunity, he flung himſelf into a ſofa, which was rather hid beneath the deep ſhadow of its canopy.

The Ducheſs ſtill kept her place at his ſide. Leaning his head upon one hand, while ſhe held firm by the other, he ſtruck his forehead ſeveral times, from the extremeſt impatience. "What ails you, Chevalier?" inquired ſhe, gently preſſing his hand, and ſoftening her voice to the moſt perſuaſive pathos: "If you want a friend to adviſe, to aſſiſt you? behold one in me!"—"Madam," replied he, "your kindneſs oppreſſes me!"—"Alas! de Cevennes," ſaid ſhe, profoundly ſighing,

ſighing, and graſping the hand ſhe detained yet more fervently; "you appear to miſtake me; to imagine that my profeſſions are merely thoſe of impertinent curioſity, or cold politeneſs. But no; my heart is—is" ſhe ſtammered; and preſſing her other hand to her forehead, ſighed again.

Sigiſmund raiſed his hand over his brows, and looking ſtedfaſtly at her, her eyes fell beneath his; and ſhaking his head with an emotion of cold conviction, made no reply. She ſaw not his action; but again timidly raiſing her eyes, ſaid, while her voice gradually roſe in energy as ſhe proceeded: "I would be your friend; you are dejected; I have perceived it with anguiſh: you are young, handſome, and noble! What then can diſturb your content? Are you ambitious? If ſo," cried ſhe, haſtily anſwering herſelf, and ſnatching his hand, between both hers, to her heart, "I can give you power, riches! By my preſent rank in Germany, I can command much in this empire: but in Ruſſia, where I was born, my friendſhip with the great Katherine would load you with honours." She pauſed; and Sigiſmund, in a paroxyſm of the

moſt decided abhorrence, laying his other hand upon hers, muſed for a moment, with his eyes bent to the ground.

She miſinterpreted the cauſe of this action; and in a hurried and enraptured voice continued; "Fly with me to Ruſſia! and in that glorious country, every tranſport of love and grandeur ſhall be yours! Yes, Theodore, my heart, myſelf, my wealth, my dignities, all, all ſhall be yours!" She dropt her head upon his arm. He ſtarted up: and while the red glow of honour crimſoned his cheek, he extricated his hands from hers, and coolly ſaid, "I thank you, Madam! But I have no ambition. I ever hated Ruſſian women, and Ruſſian manners; and the conduct of your Highneſs has changed my prejudice to a principle." He turned from her: and the Ducheſs, pale with diſappointment and rage, ſtamping furiouſly on the ground, ſtood for a moment, burſting with paſſion. Then haſtily flying after him, ſhe caught fiercely hold of his arm; and ſtooping down to look full up in his face, exclaimed, while the laugh of a demon parted her lips, "De Cevennes! you do not know me!" Her eyes flaſhed the malignant

malignant pleaſure of hell: and leaving her graſp, he quietly proceeded through the crowd in the veſtibule; till meeting Hirchfeld, he put his arm through his, and they ſauntered on from chamber to chamber, paſſing each gay ſpectacle of pleaſure, with the diſtempered eyes of miſery.

Thus the bright and long expected hours of grandeur rolled away. Splendour dazzled the ſenſes; and mirth intoxicated the ſoul. Here was the feſtive ſtep; and there the joyous ſmile of exhilarated happineſs. Delight waved his purple pinions over the ſcene, till every heart ſickened with ſatiety.—Not every heart!—In that mad groupe there were boſoms dead to every pleaſure. The ſmile was on their lips, but death ſat in their eyes. Their ſouls were mildewed by ſorrow; and they walked about like machines, impelled, but not inſpired.

Such beings were Sigiſmund and Hirchfeld. The heart of Sigiſmund was lacerated, was inſulted; and the breaſt of Hirchfeld was racked by the hotteſt jealouſy.

The

The next morning, Sigiſmund was rouſed from his almoſt momentary ſleep by the abrupt entrance of Hirchfeld into his chamber. The countenance of the young Rhinelander bore evident marks of horror and indignation. Sigiſmund ſtarted up in his bed; and giving his hand to his friend, while he ſeated himſelf beſide him, anxiouſly inquired what had happened.

"Great God!" exclaimed Hirchfeld, ſtriking his clenched hand with fury upon his knee, "that ſuch a villain ſhould have exiſtence!"—"You are ſpeaking of Blackenberg!" cried Sigiſmund in a tone of abhorrence; "what has the monſter done to you?" "Aye, monſter indeed!" returned he, almoſt breathleſs with his emotions; "I have overheard him and that damnable Ducheſs planning your deſtruction."—"My deſtruction?" aſked Sigiſmund. "Yes," cried he; "as I hope for redemption, ſhe told him that her hatred of you had no bounds. That ſhe ſhould rejoice to *ſee your heart's blood ruſhing over her hands!* Thoſe were her very words. A devil! a very devil!" cried he, ſtarting up, and traverſing the room with fury.

"Be

"Be compoſed," ſaid Sigiſmund.—"Compoſed," cried he, interrupting him with redoubled paſſion, "No, de Cevennes; I love you; I have ſworn to be your defender, and by the Holy God of Juſtice," cried he, drawing his ſabre from its ſcabbard, and dropping on his knee, "I again ſwear, that before Blackenberg ſhall injure one hair in your head, I will dye this ſteel, deep in the blood of both him and his fiend-like emiſſary."

The grateful heart of young Koningſtein heaved in his breaſt, and opening his extended arms, he exclaimed, "My friend, my brother!" Herchfeld ſprang up, and flinging himſelf upon his neck, preſſed him fervently to his boſom. Sigiſmund raiſed his head; a burſt of tears had guſhed from his eyes, and bathed his cheek. Herchfeld looked at him with ſurpriſe: "O, my friend!" cried the unhappy brother of Xavier, "forget that you have ſeen me weep, till I can explain to you ſuch reaſons for this weakneſs as harrows me to remember!"—"Whatever they are, and however enigmatical your conduct ſometimes appears, I believe that you are a man of honour, and at preſent I ſeek to know no further.

ther. Let us provide againſt the machinations of your deſtroyers.

" But firſt," aſked Sigiſmund, " tell me how you heard them, and what they ſaid?"— " The abominable Ducheſs," replied he, " ſleeps in a chamber next to the cloſet that adjoins my room. After all the buſtle of laſt night, when every perſon had retired to reſt, as uſual, I went there to my devotions: I had hardly finiſhed my Paternoſter, and raiſed my crucifix in my hand, before I heard the door open of the Ducheſs's apartment. Prior to this night I had always uſed to finiſh my prayers before ſhe entered; the clearneſs of the ſound of her ſtep, convinced me that ſhould I continue my devotions, ſhe would hear every ſyllable I uttered. I heſitated a few minutes, whether I ſhould boldly proceed or withdraw into my bed-room; when I was determined, by a gentle tap at her door; ſhe opened it, and the next moment I heard the voice of Blackenberg ſay in a high whiſper, " Now, my dear Ducheſs I am at your diſpoſal."— " Sit down," returned ſhe, " I will bolt the door, and then to our arrangements."

" She

" She faſtened the lock, and then ſeating herſelf, reſumed, " How fortunate for my inſulted honour, that your Lordſhip had preconceived ſo juſt an opinion of this vile Theodore."—" A villain," exclaimed he, " how dare he preſume to offer love to a Princeſs of your diſtinction?" The Ducheſs burſt into a laugh: " Ah! but he ſhall ſmart for it: I would rejoice to ſee his heart's blood ruſhing over my hands!"

" Execrable woman," ejaculated Hirchfeld, " thoſe were her very words." He proceeded with redoubled heat in his narrative:

" If theſe are really your ſentiments," cried Blackenberg, in a doubting voice."—" Nonſenſe," cried ſhe, " why ſhould you ſuſpect me? I affirm by all that is dear to my wiſhes, that were I a man, I would fight him to his death; and, as a woman, I will poiſon him!"—" Dear, angelic Princeſs," cried the Count, " my ſoul worſhips you for this."—" Does it?" ſaid ſhe, " then obey me, and before this time to-morrow morning (for the dawn began to break) procure me a phial of the moſt deadly poiſon.'—" I will do my utmoſt,"

utmoſt," anſwered Blackenberg, "but ſuppoſe he eſcapes drinking it?"—"Then a dagger," exclaimed your arch-enemy, "either from your hand, or mine own, muſt finiſh the buſineſs.

"Foaming with fury at this diabolical conſpiracy againſt you, I would have ruſhed into their apartment, but the noiſe which I made in leaping from my knees, ſent him like an arrow from the chamber, and ſhe followed him with a ſwiftneſs that only was equalled by the haſte with which I flew to you."

Sigiſmund was ſilent. "Speak! what is to be reſolved?" inquired Hirchfeld; "I will challenge the Count. But what can be done with that female aſſaſſin? By Heaven, I never felt ſuch fury in my breaſt before? I could tear her limb from limb. O! is it poſſible that you could ever have made theſe overtures to her, which ſhe complained of?"—"The reverſe," replied Sigiſmund, "her conduct deſerves no terms, and I will tell you all."

Sigiſmund

Sigiſmund now repeated the ſubſtance of her unwomanly converſation with him; and ended with ſaying, "Her parting words were uttered with a hideous emphaſis, that I knew not how to explain: ſhe cried, *You do not know me!* and turned away. I ſmiled at her heat; and when I met you, I found a kind of refuge from her farther impertinence."—"Impertinence," exclaimed Hirchfeld, "I wiſh to God it may end in nothing elſe! But ſhe ſaid true; *you knew her not!*—Let me declare to you what ſhe is! Brought up in the very center of the brutal Court of Ruſſia, where the ruffian paſſions of Katherine taught her every vice, to which her own horrible nature was but too prone, her rank and beauty have been ſnares to many. O, ſhe is a fiend, a very fiend! and Heaven grant, that Lady Louiſe may eſcape her contagious friendſhip!"

"If you are intereſted in that," returned Sigiſmund, a little ſurpriſed, "I think their evident hatred of each other is more than temperately ſhewn. "Am I intereſted in her?" replied Hirchfeld, riſing and pacing the room in agitation; "Yes, as I value my own honour, for ſhe will one day bear my name." Sigiſmund only

ſighed: he recollected her more than coquetry with regard to himſelf; and he ſighed to think that the honeſt and ardent heart of his romantic friend ſhould be ſacrificed to ſo meretricious a woman.

"But I will not ſpeak of Louiſe," cried Hirchfeld, ſuddenly ſeating himſelf; "her remembrance is my greateſt torment."—"My dear fellow," ſaid Sigiſmund, holding out his hand to him, "may you be happy in every wiſh of your heart; but hearken to me; I never knew what it is to feel what you now do, but my reaſon tells me, to beſeech you to beware of a girl, who will profeſs to love you when ſhe turns her tendereſt attentions to another."

The blood of the young ſoldier ruſhed into his face: he ſtarted up, then turning to Sigiſmund, cried in a half choaked voice: "Did any other man inſinuate that of the woman I idolize, his blood ſhould waſh out the calumny! but from you it is no calumny: I have ſeen the preference of that cruel creature for yourſelf, and I am miſerable!" He flung himſelf for a moment into a chair. Sigiſmund knew not

not what to ſay; he wiſhed not to irritate his jealous ſenſibility, by dwelling longer on her glaring fault; neither did he wiſh to plunge him farther into a dangerous error, by ſoothing the preſent tempeſt of his feelings. He held the hand of his friend faſt in his, while Hirchfeld ſuddenly looking up, cried, "I am aſhamed of thus cowardly complaining! Let me conſult with you how we are to act with regard to your abominable enemies? How, in the name of Heaven, have you offended this Blackenberg?"

"Alas!" anſwered Sigiſmund, with a ſmile of anguiſh, "you ſhall one day know: it is he who has offended me, and in a manner, that had he ten thouſand lives to forfeit, he could not make compenſation: that bright ſpring of life in which others breathe with bliſs and tranſport, to me he has transformed to deſolation: O! he has ſteeped my heart in bitterneſs!" He covered his face in the pillow. "De Cevennes," cried Hirchfeld, opening his eyes wide with aſtoniſhment; "and can you have ſuffered all this from a villain, and yet let him live? I believe that you have courage."—"I have," anſwered Sigiſmund,

" but, in this, I am a coward; he is the brother-in-law of my more than father; that ſtops my vengeance."

" What?" cried Hirchfeld, yet more ſurpriſed, " is your uncle ignorant that Blackenberg has injured you?"—" He is," anſwered the young Koningſtein; " but he ſhall not remain long ſo; and when I do reveal his crimes to de Solignac, God will revenge my wrongs! till that hour I can only avoid his plots."—" But how will that be poſſible?" aſked Hirchfeld: " how can you eſcape poiſon?"—" By never taſting any thing that he or the Ducheſs offer me: I have one friend in the Caſtle, whom I will truſt with this diſcovery; ſhe can provide every refreſhment for me without abandoning myſelf in the leaſt to chance."—" Well," ſaid Hirchfeld, " I do not deſire to dive deeper into your ſecrets than you are willing to allow me; but to the utmoſt peril of my life you ſhall have my ſervices. If this villainous Count does attempt your exiſtence as he threatened, depend upon it his ſhall pay the hazard. Such milkineſs of ſoul as you poſſeſs encourages theſe raſcals." Sigiſmund only ſighed; and thanking

thanking his friend with a warm preſſure of the hand, he told him, if he would walk out upon the lawn, he would riſe and follow him.

The ſun had now riſen: and Sigiſmund immediately ſpringing from his bed, haſtily threw on his cloaths; and was preparing to ſeek the park, when, in paſſing through the gallery which led from the eaſtern apartments to thoſe in the weſtern tower, with a deſign to awaken and conſult with Madame Stahl before he went to Hirchfeld, he heard a low murmur in an apartment at the end of another paſſage that turned off to the right; he walked on, and as he proceeded, the whiſpering ſounded more diſtinctly; when looking over his ſhoulder he ſaw the infamous Count, leading the Ducheſs to her own chamber, which he had juſt paſſed. As Blackenberg opened the door he diſtinctly heard him ſay, "As you would have me believe your vows, be conſtant to our deſigns on Theodore!"— "Be ſatisfied," ſaid ſhe, and cloſed the door.

The Count walked on, and came up to Sigiſmund, who ſtood gazing out of an opened window, determined that he ſhould not

paſs him. When Blackenberg ſaw who it was, he gave ſuch a ſtart, that Sigiſmund turned round, and looked at him with a glance ſo full of contempt that it ſpoke immediately to his guilty ſoul: bending his horrid brows in a frown, which his artifice in vain tried to diſpel, he ſaid in a voice of angry trepidation, "An early hour to be up, Chevalier, after laſt night's revelry?" The indignant ſpirit of the young man could not reply; he only turned his eyes on him again, with an accuſing expreſſion darting through his every feature, which made the heart of Blackenberg die within him. Shaking his head two or three times, as if that could throw off his own conſcience, and perhaps the conviction of the other, he attempted to put his arm through that of Sigiſmund's, and ſaid, "whatever cauſe has kept you waking, let us walk; a little air will diſpel the vapours of drinking."

"Count Blackenberg," cried Sigiſmund, in a voice of determined abhorrence, and ſnatching from him his arm, "I wiſh to be alone." Blackenberg was transfixed; and Sigiſmund coolly reſumed his former poſture.

"Sir,"

"Sir," cried the Count in a voice of thunder, ſuddenly collecting his almoſt loſt preſence of mind," what means your inſolence? have you forgotten who I am?"—"No," ſaid the indignant ſon of Koningſtein, "*I know you well!* and the day is not far diſtant when you ſhall *know me.*"

He walked calmly away, leaving Blackenberg leaning againſt the ſide of the wall, electrified by ten thouſand nameleſs horrors of he knew not what.

Sigiſmund proceeded to the lawn, fearful, that if he went to the apartment of Madam Stahl, he might be watched, and ſo his early friend be involved in the hatred of the Count. Hirchfeld met him, and wrapping themſelves within their cloaks, they ſtrolled far into the park, while he related what had paſſed between him and Blackenberg. Their converſation was long, but perplexed. Sigiſmund yet concealed his hiſtory from his friend: and Hirchfeld, unable to adviſe any thing but an immediate challenge, wondered to hear his gentleſpirited auditor again declare, that merely his life, would be no compenſation; the empire

muſt

muſt witneſs the puniſhment due to his guilt, elſe he ſhould yet remain, what he felt he muſt ever be, unappeaſed.

In the midſt of this painful and unfruitful debate they were interrupted, after they had been ſauntering for nearly three hours, by the ſudden appearance of the Vicomte. "My dear boy!" cried de Solignac, "I am glad I have found you. I think I may ſpeak before your friend here; becauſe you ſeem to have ſo particularly attached yourſelf to his company. Before I begin, remember I am only a delegate: I utter not mine own ſentiments, but thoſe of another. It is right that you ought to rivet yourſelf to the friendſhip of a worthy perſon of your own age; but my dear Alexina thinks otherwiſe. You know how fondly ſhe loves you: and, indeed, moſt of laſt night, after we had retired, ſhe paſſed in tears, at what ſhe called your neglect of her."

"My neglect of her!" interrupted Sigiſmund, haſtily cloſing his ſwimming eyes. "O my dear Vicomte! tell my more than mother, that ſhe muſt read my naked ſoul before ſhe can

can know how I love her! Where is ſhe?" aſked he abruptly, "that I may fly to her to convince her that I am yet her ſon?"—"Stay, Theodore!" ſaid de Solignac, withholding him; "you are indeed ſtrangely altered of late: your feelings are now always in a tempeſt. To what can I attribute this horrid revolution in your mind? Rectitude is always ſerene."

Sigiſmund let go the arm of his friend; and raiſing his folded hands to Heaven, he exclaimed in a voice of ſtifled agony, "What more?"—"Theodore!" cried the terrified Vicomte, trying to draw one hand from his weeping face, as he leaned his diſtracted breaſt againſt the trunk of a tree; "Theodore!" repeated he, "what does this mean? Why theſe frantic emotions?"

Sigiſmund made no reply; but raiſing his imploring eyes to the ſky, knocked his clenched hand againſt his heart. They were all ſilent. The unhappy young man firſt lifted up his head. The amazed and grieved Vicomte ſtood gazing on him in the deepeſt ſorrow. Sigiſmund held out his hand to him: "O my father!" cried he, "I cannot bear to be loaded

loaded by you with the ſuſpicions of ingratitude and vice. I am miſerable; but God will ſoon dry my tears." He ſmiled as he ſpoke: and flinging himſelf into the arms of the Vicomte, received his ſuppreſſed ſobs into his boſom.

All this time Hirchfeld ſtood reſting upon his yet drawn ſabre, which he had forgotten to replace in its ſcabbard. His eyes were bent on his myſterious friend. Sigiſmund again begged to be conducted to the Vicomteſſe: and turning their ſteps that way, they ſoon entered the lawn, on which all the diſſipated gueſts of the Caſtle were now aſſembled, with a deſign of breathing a little freſh air into their yet drowſy frames.

Sigiſmund ſoon diſcovered his dear Vicomteſſe, at ſome diſtance from the reſt, walking alone beneath the ſhade of the cedars which fringed the weſtern foſſe. He flew; and kiſſing her two hands, would have dropt at her feet; but ſhe, ſtooping down, caught him to her breaſt. "My dearly loved deſerter!" ſaid ſhe, "where, where do you hide yourſelf?" She ſmiled through the thronging tears

tears of pleaſure which danced in her eyes.—When again preſſing her hands to his lips, he replied, "Wherever I am, my affection for you, my dear, dear Madam, can never decreaſe!"—"Ah! but it may be exceeded!" ſaid ſhe, archly; "did you beſtow it on a heart worthy of yours, I ſhould even rejoice; but I fear that you love the haughty Ducheſs of Saxe Zeits; or, perhaps, the beautiful daughter of the Counteſs of Erfurt. My Theodore, they are both undeſerving of you. Handſome as is the Ducheſs, I believe that ſhe is a profligate: and faſcinating as is alſo the Lady Louiſe, her inſatiable vanity is flagrant to a crime."

"Be at eaſe, my deareſt Madam!" returned Sigiſmund; "I abhor the Ducheſs, and Lady Louiſe I deſpiſe."—"Do not miſlead my anxiety by this aſſertion," ſaid the Vicomteſſe, her happy countenance fading with ſolicitude: "Do I not know you are diſquieted? Did you not promiſe me your confidence? And now you deny having any thing to reveal. O Theodore!"—"My dear Vicomteſſe!" returned he, ſmiling, and preſſing her hand, "Is there nothing that can rankle in

in the heart of a young man but a love ſecret?" The Vicomteſſe obſerved his ſmile; and while the heightened colour paſſed over her face, ſhe laughed, and ſaid, "True! you ſee the vanity of my ſex: we muſt date all woes from the power of our own influence."—"And not a very enviable attribute either," returned he, pleaſed to turn the converſation; "if you boaſt on that, your pride ſtops at an equality with devils."—"No, not ſo bad," replied ſhe. "Obſerve; our influence can produce happineſs, if we choſe not to adjudge pain."—"Worſe and worſe," anſwered Sigiſmund, allowing his penſive features again to relax into a ſmile; "the more you eſtabliſh your free agency, the heavier you prove your guilt."

The Vicomteſſe laughed aloud; and had again opened her lips to reply, when ſhe was prevented by the Counteſs, who taking hold of her hand, put it into that of a very lovely girl. "This young Lady, my dear Vicomteſſe," ſaid ſhe, "is Lady Emma Wildenſtein, niece to the Duke of Deux-ponts; whom I have alſo the honour of preſenting to you."

The

The Vicomteſſe ſtill held the hand of the young Lady; and bowing to the Duke, whoſe noble air and countenance immediately challenged her eſteem, ſhe ſaid, "While I have the pleaſure of converſing with your lovely niece, allow me to have the happineſs of introducing to your Highneſs the Chevalier de Cevennes, the nephew of my Lord?" Sigiſmund bowed to the Duke; and was turning away to follow the Vicomteſſe and Lady Emma, when his Highneſs took hold of his arm, and ſaid, "We part not ſo; I want to be informed of the ſeparate names of all theſe fair Ladies who are traverſing up and down the lawn; and I think, from the gallantry of your country, you will be the beſt informant." Sigiſmund ſmiled; and ſuffered his Highneſs to lead him on.

The Duke looked about in ſilence, with a degree of anxiety which would have intereſted Sigiſmund, had he been at leiſure to remark his ſolicitude: but, too much occupied in his own reflections, he did not obſerve his illuſtrious companion, till the voice of another, addreſſing the Duke, made him ſtart.

"What! has your Highneſs loſt your heart, that you are ſearching ſo intently in the face of each pretty woman as ſhe paſſes you?" As he ſpoke he put his hand through the other arm of the Duke, and proceeded with him. "My anſwer," ſaid his Highneſs, "ſhall be a queſtion to the Chevalier:" Sigiſmund bowed, and he continued: "Why is not Roſamund Petrie amongſt theſe Ladies?"—"Becauſe," replied Sigiſmund, with a ſigh of grateful regret that he could not repreſs, "ſhe is ill."—"Ill!" reiterated Deux-ponts, with a look of doubtful alarm; "how long has ſhe been ſo? What is her diſeaſe?"—"A derangement of her reaſon." "Great God!" exclaimed the Duke.

"Yes," continued Sigiſmund; "and ſorry am I to add, that ſhe is even ſo ill as to be confined. She is now under the care of the nuns of the Holy Virgin."—"Are you ſure of this?" aſked his Highneſs, in hurrying accents; "did you ſee her yourſelf?"—"No," anſwered he; "I have never ſeen her, but I have every reaſon to believe that it is true." "Was Count Blackenberg your authority?" inquired Deux-ponts in a tone of impatience.

"No,"

"No," replied Sigiſmund, with a look of contempt, "it was one of the domeſtics in the houſe."—"But a domeſtic in the houſe may be bribed!" ſaid the Duke, with a frown of deep ſuſpicion, and ſhaking his head.

"For why?" aſked the gentleman who leaned on his right arm: "but pardon me, your Highneſs muſt have ſome cauſe for doubting the truth of what the Chevalier advances, elſe to me it appears ſtrange."

Deux-ponts did not anſwer; neither did Sigiſmund: the few words which his Highneſs had uttered, conjured up a thouſand vague ideas in his already diſturbed boſom. Once awakened to ſuſpicion, he ſuſpected the integrity of Blackenberg in every action of his life.

After a conſiderable pauſe the Duke, in a ſlow and collected voice, again turned to his young companion: "You tell me that you have never ſeen Roſamund: Do you know how long ſhe has been confined?"—"I believe about a fortnight."——"A fortnight! Can you inform me whence aroſe her diſorder?" The conſcious blood of Sigiſmund

ruſhed to his heart: he turned ſick, and his arm trembled on the arm of the Duke. His Highneſs looked at him with confirmed dread. "Then my ſuſpicions are true? Blackenberg!" He pauſed for a reply, gazing earneſtly in the fluctuating countenance of the Chevalier.

"From what cauſe your Highneſs ſuſpects the Count," anſwered Sigiſmund in a voice of trepidation, "I know not; but the compaſſionate Roſamund loſt her ſenſes by her too generous ſympathy with a family that—that can only bleſs her!" He ceaſed; and bending down his head, tried to regain that compoſure which he had almoſt entirely loſt.

The Duke obſerved him with emotions of ſurpriſe and pity. "De Cevennes!" ſaid he, in a tone of deep intereſt, "is it poſſible that you have never ſeen her? This agitation makes a far different aſſertion." Sigiſmund only ſighed: and after a moment's longer ſilence, he ſaid, "I have ſpoken truth: I have never ſeen her; but if I did not feel as I do, whenever her name is mentioned, I ſhould be a monſter of ingratitude."—"Well,' ſaid

ſaid the Duke, "when you know more of me, perhaps you will not withhold that part of your confidence which relates to her. "And I am ſure," continued he, turning to his friend on his right, who liſtened with wonder, "that Count Daun here, will be ſilent on all that has paſſed."—"Upon my honour!" anſwered the General; "and any ſervices which I can perform for you and your beautiful favourite, command me."

At the name of Daun, Sigiſmund fixed his eyes on the figure of the General. He gazed on the heroic conqueror of the King of Pruſſia with awe and reverence. Turning to the Duke, while the enthuſiaſm of his young heart beat in his breaſt, theſe few words burſt from his lips: "With ſuch as you my ſoul ſhall know no diſguiſe!" He caught the hands of both Deux-ponts and Daun, and claſped them to his breaſt. A ſmile of pleaſure ſhone in the faces of both the Generals; and Daun graſping the hand that held his, ſaid, "This enthuſiaſm of a young and unadulterated heart is dearer to me than the applauſes of all the Empire."

"Yes," ſaid the Duke, turning to the bluſhing Sigiſmund, whoſe confuſion now at the vehemence of his action covered him with ſcarlet; "I muſt love the friend of Roſamund; and as a firſt eſſay of that confidence which you have ſo recently promiſed, and which I will ſo highly value, anſwer me one queſtion with ſincerity!"—"I will," returned Sigiſmund.—"Then," reſumed Deuxponts, an air of raillery ſtruggling with the thoughtful curve of his brow, "you have informed me that you never beheld Roſamund; yet, you will perſiſt no longer, I believe, when I aſſure you, that I in part poſſeſſed the confidence of that lovely girl. Your title is de Cevennes; I am ignorant of your chriſtian name, but I know ſhe loved; and the name which ſhe once ejaculated ſo pathetically in my ear, was that of Xavier!—Now will you deny that you and he are one?"

His Highneſs received no anſwer; and looking haſtily round, to convict him in what he ſaid, he beheld him pale and almoſt fainting. When he ſaw that he was obſerved, he laid his hand upon his almoſt burſting heart, and

and ſhaking his head, covered his face with his handkerchief.

The Duke and Daun looked on each other; and the former was preparing to apologize for his inconſiderate inquiries, when Count Blackenberg coming up, laid his hand on the ſhoulder of the General and ſaid he was ſent by the Counteſs to lead them to the breakfaſt room.

At the ſound of his voice, Sigiſmund abruptly quitted the arm of the Duke, and hurrying through a break in ſome underwood, ſtruck high into the park.

CHAP. II.

" O memory! thou ſoul of joy and pain!
Thou actor of our paſſions o'er again!
Why doſt thou aggravate the wretch's woe?
Why add continuous ſmart to every blow?
Few are my joys! alas, how ſoon forgot!
On that kind quarter, thou invad'ſt me not.
While ſharp and numberleſs my ſorrows fall;
Yet thou repeat'ſt, and multiplies them all!"

CAPT. MARJORIBANKS.

SIGISMUND threw himſelf down by the mouth of a little fountain: he tried to tranquilize

quilize his ſpirits, to collect his ſcattered ſenſes, and to arrange in his own mind a future plan of ſteady conduct. The arrival of the Duke of Deux-ponts and of Count Daun, men of ſuch great power and ſtrict integrity, determined him to ſeize the firſt opportunity of revealing his birth and ſituation to the Vicomte. Firſt to conſult him; and then, if it met with his approbation, to ſeek the advice of the two Generals, how to apply to the Empreſs, for juſtice on Blackenberg, and a reſtitution of his rights.

His heart failed at the idea of perhaps being obliged to call upon the evidence of the Vicomte, to appear againſt the man whom he ſtiled his brother: but the more he conſidered this objection, the weaker he felt its force.—He reſolved firſt to ſee Madame Stahl; to receive her paper; to give it, with all the documents ſhe could find, to the Vicomte; and after having convinced de Solignac, immediately to apply to the Empire.

More ſatisfied by the reſult of this hour's deliberation, he roſe up, and with a calmneſs

to

to which he had been long a ſtranger, he ſlowly ſauntered back to the Caſtle.

When he entered the parlour, the company were yet at breakfaſt. The Vicomteſſe ſtretched out her hand to him, and deſired him to ſit between her and Lady Emma. He readily took the ſeat aſſigned him; and replied to her queſtion of where he had been, that he had juſt come from ſtrolling along the banks of the river. "That is a very favourite walk of yours," ſaid the Ducheſs of Saxe Zeits, who ſat nearly oppoſite to him, between the Duke and Daun: "ſo young a man ought not to encourage ſuch penſive habits."—"Right," ſaid the Vicomte, interrupting her; "and I wiſh your Highneſs would condeſcend to take my penſeroſo nephew under your guidance."—"Ah!" returned the Ducheſs laughing; "I am ſure I ſhould have a very rebellious charge."—"Speak for yourſelf, Theodore!" ſaid the Vicomte, looking at him; "would you not conceive yourſelf too happy by the notice of ſo lovely a guardian?"

Sigiſmund raiſed his head from whiſpering to Lady Emma; and turning his powerful eyes

eyes direct upon the artful Ruſſian, "The ſoul of the Ducheſs of Saxe Zeits ſpeaks my reply to her own heart, with greater energy than I can utter it." The cheek of her Highneſs was a little bleached at the emphaſis and look with which this equivocal ſpeech was delivered; and ſtooping her head to ſip her coffee, ſhe was covered with ſtill greater confuſion, by the ſudden and loud voice of Hirchfeld. "Ducheſs!" cried he, "a red ſtream would better become a Lady's cheek than her hands! Do not you agree with me, Count?" ſaid he, addreſſing the now pallid Blackenberg, who ſat biting his lips, and ready to ſtart from his chair, to choak the throat that uttered the words.

"You do not anſwer me?" added he; "and therefore I will myſelf. If I have ſaid any thing to offend your Lordſhip, lay the blame on a diſtempered mind. I am apt to dream: but *dreams are from the gods!* What poet ſays ſo?" aſked he, turning with an air of indifference to Sigiſmund. "I do not recollect," ſaid he; "I have a treacherous memory."—"That is not a juſt aſſertion," interrupted the Vicomte; "for you have related circumſtances

circumſtances of your childhood, which ſeem almoſt miraculous to be remembered by one ſo young."—" The circumſtances are different, my Lord!' ſaid Sigiſmund, ſpeaking to the Vicomte; " the one aſſertion does not invalidate the other. A memory cannot boaſt of its peculiar retention, when the incidents which it holds have been rivetted there by the loſs of health, of peace, of every thing!'

" Of every thing!" whiſpered the Vicomteſſe in a reproaching voice, her eyes filling with tears. He made no reply; but taking her hand, preſſed it to his lips.

The eyes of the whole table were fixed upon him. The Count felt unaccountably embarraſſed; and the infamous Ducheſs laughed aloud, turned to the Duke, and ſtriking him on the ſhoulder, ſaid, " Why ſo grave? This young miſerable will infect us all!"—" True!" anſwered his Highneſs, deeply ſighing; " we have fallen into ſome unhappy obſervations: and to change the converſation entirely, I vote for a little muſic."

As he ſpoke he turned to Lady Louiſe, who ſat on his right; and taking her hand, ſaid,

" My

" My fair Lady, may I petition for a ſong?" — " A ſong at Breakfaſt!" ſaid ſhe ſmiling; " there is ſomething ridiculous in ſuch a requeſt!"—" Well then, any thing elſe that you pleaſe; for the demon of diſcord ſeems to have waved her tremendous wand amongſt us; and I apply to you to charm us into harmony."—" Well then," ſaid ſhe bowing, " I will oblige your Highneſs."

She called for her muſic-caſe; which one of the ſervants holding to her, while ſhe drew forth one of her favourite airs, a ſmall octavo volume dropped out, and fell upon the carpet. The Count Daun ſtooped to take it up; and caſually opening it, he found it a collection of miſcellaneous poems. His eye fell on the title of one of them. He ran over the firſt ſtanza to himſelf; and held it open in his hand, while Lady Louiſe ſang. When ſhe had finiſhed, and the company ceaſed their plaudits, he handed her the book, and ſaid, " So much I admire the ſoft tones of your voice, that I muſt ſolicit your Ladyſhip to read this poem aloud. A lovely woman is never ſo lovely as when ſhe is breathing the touching lines of poetry."

Lady

Lady Louiſe would have declined it; but the Duke joining his earneſt ſolicitations to thoſe of Daun, ſhe took the volume, and in a really ſweet voice and finely modulated accents, began:

FAIR ANNIE.

" O! hark how the woods groan around us; while now
" In deluges fall the chill rain;
" Each guſt, as it ſhakes the wet leaves from the bough,
" Deep drenches my garments; O think of thy vow,
" Lord Malcolm! and baniſh my pain.

" Oh! where doſt thou lead me? Alas! what a night!
" No object but clouds I behold—
" The winds whiſtle round me!—O God! for a light
" The woods, as they ſhake, make me ſtart with affright;
" Speak! ſpeak! for thy hands are death cold!"

" Annie! Annie, be calm; while thy Malcolm is here,
" Should ſuch terrors thy boſom moleſt?
" The wind and the rain only Annie ſhould fear;
" And fear not e'en them, if her lover is dear,
" Or dear the huſh'd babe on her breaſt!"

" O cold is my baby!" fair Annie replied,
" And wet, though aſleep in my arms;
" Yet firm in its father will Annie confide,
" Tho' fierce are his glances; but when I'm his bride,
" That tranſport ſhall ceaſe theſe alarms."

Lord Malcolm replied not: but faſt thro' the wood,
'Mid the moiſt graſs and weeds, hurried on.
Annie's cheeks were milk white, and her quick flowing blood.
Was ſtopp'd by the roar of a dark rapid flood,
While Lord Malcolm firſt uttered a groan.

" O paſs this black water!" ſaid Annie in fear,
" For ſad is the ſound of its wave."
" Nay pauſe," cried Lord Malcolm; " its wave is thy bier;
" Eor thou, and thy baby, muſt both ſlumber here,
" And periſh, my honour to ſave.

" Quick breathe out a prayer, for this moment ye die;
" No ſuccour is near ye," he ſaid.
Annie's heart had its death-ſtroke; ſhe ſaw in his eye
(As the moon broke in light from the clouds of the ſky)
The ſentence his accents conveyed.

" O ſave me! O ſave me! Lord Malcolm, ſhe rav'd,
" Or ſave my poor baby alone!
" O was it for this every ſorrow I brav'd!
" For this by thy graces and wit was enſlav'd,
" To die in this foreſt unknown?"

" Come, trifle no longer! this hour is thy laſt!"
Deep guilt o'er his countenance ſpread:
While ſhe ſtruggl'd he ſtrove round her figure to caſt
His arms; but ſhe burſt from their bonds, tho' ſo faſt,
And fled from him frantic with dread.

And flying, with agoniz'd terror ſhe preſt
Her infant ſtill nearer her heart;
The preſſure, the ſtorm, and that high throbbing breaſt,
Awak'd it from ſleep, and its crying diſtreſt,
And doubled her haſte and her ſmart.

But now ſunk the moon, and the wind roſe again,
And the trees groan'd and bow'd all around;
In floods heavy ſounding pour'd down the loud rain—
Annie liſten'd all breathleſs, but linſten'd in vain,
For the footſteps were loſt in the ſound.

Yet ſtill by the ſide of the river ſhe fled;
Spent, and fainting ſhe wept o'er her child

Her

Her tears fell in torrents of fire on its head—
She ſtopp'd and ſhe heard cloſe behind her a tread;
She flew, deſp'rate, frantic, and wild.

But ah! as ſhe fled, the clay bank and ſoak'd graſs
Gave way, and ſhe fell with affright;
Her ſenſes were loſt for awhile; but alas!
Awaking, ſhe hears the waves roar as they paſs,
And ſees their black gleam thro' the night.

"O if you e'er lov'd me! O ſave me, I pray!"
She ſobb'd, as ſhe fell at his feet:
"O! cruel Lord Malcolm, your purpoſe delay—
"Spare, ſpare my loſt ſoul, and I ſwear to decay,
"Unknown, in ſome pious retreat!

"Ah! think ye, how dreadful, how fearful to die!
"And think of your vow, and your love!
"O! think of thoſe times, when a half utter'd ſigh,
"A look, or a word, or a tear in mine eye,
"To anguiſh that boſom could move!"

Lord Malcolm was ſilent; but death and deſpair
Threaten'd fiercely—he hurried her on.
"My baby! my baby!" Her cries rent the air;
But alas! the laſt plunge of young Annie the fair
Was ſoon heard thro' the darkneſs alone.

Lord Malcolm return'd; but the trees in the wood
Seem'd to move with ſtrange ſounds on the blaſt,
As the rain-drops feel down, ſtill he ſtarted, and ſtood,
And liſten'd, but heard the faint roar of the flood,
Then, trembling, redoubled his haſte.

Yet ſoon in his caſtle he ſilenc'd his dread,
For this was his proud bridal day:
The canopied purple wav'd high o'er his head;
Muſic floated around him, the light dance was led,
And all in the caſtle were gay.

The minſtrels' ſweet harps gave a ſoul to each ſound,
The tables were gorgeous with gold;
The fair ladies ſparkling on thrones all around,
Seem'd to ſmile a ſoft balm to each mercileſs wound
They made, as their eyes ſoftly rolled.

Fair, fair were the ladies, but fairer the bride,
Rob'd in velvet, and jewels, and lace:
Beauty ſat in her looks, but her heart was all pride—
" O fairer was Annie!" Lord Malcolm then cried,
And tore his fixed eye from her face.

But ſoon he forgot her, in wine and in ſong,
While the pageant and pomp fill'd his eye;
For from column to column ran roſes along,
And bluſh'd the rich hangings and luſtres among,
Dropping incenſe and ſweets from on high.

And none in the circle like Malcolm was fair,
For round his warm lips ſoftly ſtrove.
Sweet dimples and ſmiles, melting half into air:
Nut-brown were his locks; and his voice—Ah! beware!
Was ſoft as the breathings of love.

And many a lady Lord Malcolm addreſs'd,
And many then envied the bride;
None knew what a heart beat within his black breaſt,
In ſcarlet and jewels ſo pompouſly dreſs'd,
And ſhining in beauty and pride.

The feaſt paſs'd away, and the lady retir'd,
Yet Lord Malcolm ſtill ſat at the board;
At length he roſe ſlowly—half night was expir'd;
He linger'd, he loiter'd, he paus'd;—not inſpired
With her charms, was the fair lady's lord.

Slow and liſtleſs he moved; and now to the door:
His cold trembling hand was applied:

He

He paus'd: for ſtrange tremors his body ran o'er,
And deep o'er his features the damps ſwiftly pour,
And ſtill is his heart in his ſide.

Reluctant he entered; when lo! by the light,
Which gleam'd on the canopied bed,
He ſaw bending o'er it a woman in white;
Her face was averted in grief from his ſight,
And her cold hand ſupported her head.

She turn'd to his footſteps, and gave to his view
The figure of Annie the fair;
Pale and aſhy her features, her eyes without hue,
The wind of the night ſeem'd to pierce her form thro',
For her form was of thin ſpectre'd air.

She ſtretch'd her arms o'er him; he ſunk on his knees;
All awful in ſilence ſhe ſtands:
He breathes not, he ſpeaks not, while Annie he ſees,
For faſt round his heart all his blood ſeems to freeze,
And marbled to death are his hands.

The ſpectre ſtill gazes, Lord Malcolm ſtill kneels,
His fear-ſtiffen'd eyes on his face:
But what are the horrors his ſwooning ſoul feels!
For now from that gaze all her melting form ſteals,
And vaniſhes ſlow from the place;

And yet kneels Lord Malcolm; and ſtill to this day
The traveller viſits the ſcene,
And ſees where the ſpectre ſlow vaniſh'd away,
Where once the proud bride in the fatal bed lay,
And the hall where the tuptials have been.

And ſtill 'mid the ruins, all ſtiffen'd to ſtone,
He ſees the young lord on his knee;
His icy hand preſſing his ſtarting eyes down,
The weeds and rank graſs all around his feet grown,
And, where once wav'd the curtains, a tree.

Fall'n, fall'n is the caſtle! the grey moſs and fern
Have ſpread the proud battlements o'er;
The hunter, while paſſing, will oftentimes turn,
And ſigh over Annie, whoſe watery urn
Still ſends thro' the foreſt its roar.

When ſhe concluded, Sigiſmund was leaning his head upon his arm, which reſted on the table; Count Blackenberg ſat with his gloomy eyes bent on his plate; and the Ducheſs fidgetting her feet backwards and forwards under the table.

"Well," ſaid the Counteſs, as Lady Louiſe laid down the book, and the Duke took it up, "I think your Highneſs made no amendment! The ſtory has actually thrown us all into the diſmals! Improbable as it is, it literally makes the Vicomteſſe weep." All eyes were now directed to Lady de Solignac. The tears were on her cheek; but ſhe ſmiled at the obſervation, and replied: "Indeed, ſiſter, you are not far wrong: the poem has affected me. Its own beauty, the penetrating accents of Lady Louiſe, added to the knowledge which I have of a reſembling circumſtance, combined to produce directly an oppoſite

poſite effect to the benevolent one intended by the Duke."

"I ſee I am a horrid phyſician," ſaid his Highneſs, cloſing the volume and flinging it down; "I have made you all melancholy, and myſelf unhappy. The pathetic tones of this young lady, remind me of the moſt melting voice that ever reached mine ear.—And now, my Lord Count," ſaid he, turning to Blackenberg, "I ſhall enquire of you about the lovely poſſeſſor of that voice!—Where is your intereſting Roſamund?"

At the queſtion every drop of blood in the Count's body ruſhed to his face: he raiſed his eyes; but the penetrating look of his queſtioner beat them down again; and in a tone ſtrengthened by his determined villainy, he replied: "It deeply diſtreſſes me too tell your Highneſs where ſhe is; becauſe ſhe is no longer in a ſituation to underſtand the affection of her friends. After you left the Caſtle, the madneſs which ſo long had threated her broke out with a violence that is horrible to remember."—"Madneſs!" repeated the Duke.—"Did ſhe ſay nothing in that madneſs? Did

ſhe

ſhe rave of nothing?"—"O! yes." haſtily interrupted the Counteſs; "ſhe called frequently on the name of your Highneſs, and of one Leopoldina, whom I never heard her mention in her ſenſes." "Ulrica!" cried the Count with a frown that ſilenced her. "Do permit the Counteſs to proceed?" ſaid the Duke; "for by her ravings I think the cauſe of her diſorder might be diſcovered.

"Who is that Leopoldina?" aſked Daun, in a tone of alarmed anxiety.—"I believe ſome nun of the convent ſhe lived in at Preſburg," quickly anſwered the Count, frowning again at his wife, to convince her ſhe muſt not ſpeak: then turning to Deux-ponts, reſumed—

"As for her calling on your Highneſs, it was to be expected; becauſe I am certain that it was a concealed paſſion for you, and a conviction of its being unreturned, which firſt afflicted, and then bereft her of her ſenſes!"—"I deny it!" cried Sigiſmund, turning on him with all the ſobriety of confidence; "and you know that I deny it juſtly!"

Blackenberg,

Blackenberg, in the moſt evident conſternation, dropped the goblet of wine, as he was raiſing it to his mouth, and turning ſuddenly from Sigiſmund, with a forced ſmile of pity, and bowing to him, as if he looked over the effervescence of a young and perturbed ſpirit, he ſaid: "My Lord Duke, you and I will diſcuſs this ſubject afterwards."—Deuxponts looked round on Sigiſmund, and without replying to Blackenberg, ſaid: "My young friend, to what would you aſcribe the unhappy diſorder of my lovely favourite?"—"To hatred, not to love!" anſwered he, ſhaking his penſive head, and taking the hand of the aſtoniſhed Vicomteſſe, who ſat in ſilent wonder.

He aſked her if ſhe was inclined to walk on the terrace?—"No," ſaid ſhe; "you alarm me, Theodore. Do, my dear ſiſter," ſaid ſhe, addreſſing the Counteſs, "tell me how this ſtrange boy knows ſo much of our unfortunate niece?" Sigiſmund ſmiled at the queſtion; and taking the charge of Lady Emma, led her out. The Counteſs, afraid to anſwer, looked on Blackenberg, who riſing haſtily from his chair, abruptly exclaimed, in a tone of

of paſſion he could not conceal: "Was ever man ſo tortured by inquiſitive folly!" Then ſuddenly recollecting himſelf, with a gay laugh, he caught hold of the hand of his offended ſiſter-in-law, and kiſſing it, whiſpered, with an air of raillery: "Meet me in my cloſet alone this evening, and I will unveil a hiſtory of the Duke that muſt petrify you?"

The Vicomteſſe now thought that ſhe had diſcovered the meaning of her brother, and promiſed to attend him at the fall of twilight.

CHAP. III.

"Why is the warrior's cheek ſo red?
Why downward droops his muſing head?
Why that ſlow ſtep? that faint advance?
That keen, yet quick-retreating glance?—
Ah! I have ſeen his fond looks trace
Each angel-feature of her face:
Rove o'er her form with eager eye;
And ſigh and gaze, and gaze and ſigh!"

SOUTHEY.

THE whole company now adjourned to the billiard-room. The Duke, Sigiſmund, Hirchfeld, and the Vicomte, were at one table. After playing for ſeveral hours, the Ladies broke

broke in upon their game, by challenging a part in it.

The Duke would have reſigned his place to Lady Louiſe, but ſhe declined it; and giving the mace with which he preſented her to Lady Emma, ſhe ſat down; and Deux-ponts took the next ſeat near her.

The Duke ſeized this opportunity of inquiring of her reſpecting the character of de Cevennes; his aſpect had intereſted him; and his manners, notwithſtanding their equivocal confuſion, doubly ſo. Her replies, dictated by offended vanity, were little flattering to the diſpoſition of his young friend. "Indeed, my Lord!" ſaid ſhe with a haughty toſs of her head, "he is the moſt conſummate fop in the world. His fine perſon he imagines is too powerful for any female heart to reſiſt. Firſt, he preſumed to perſecute me by his odious attentions; and when I treated him with the contempt due to his impertinence, he then paid the moſt ridiculous adorations to the Ducheſs Saxe Zeits, the very woman whom a ſhort time before he had inſulted, becauſe ſhe merely frowned on me."

The

The Duke ſmiled at this ebulition of affronted jealouſy. Taking her fair hand, and preſſing it between his, he whiſpered, "But, lovely Louiſe, might not his heart have been already dedicated; and theſe aukward gallantries of which you complain be the reſult of a mind at war with itſelf? I have every reaſon to ſuppoſe that he is the lover of the beautiful, but unfortunate Roſamund, of whom we ſpoke at breakfaſt."

"Very likely," anſwered ſhe, looking down and ſighing. "His love or diſlike were always indifferent to me: but I pity the Ducheſs; for his preſent contempt of her is almoſt inſolent."—"Whether was that tender ſigh," aſked the Duke, hardly ſuppreſſing a ſmile, "in compaſſion to the Ducheſs, or in kindneſs to him? Words, my fair auditor, are not always to be truſted." She coloured; not with conſciouſneſs, but anger, at being miſtaken: and again more deeply ſighing, ſhe looked down; and in a faltering voice ſaid, "Your Highneſs is right: I ſtood upon a precipice: but I ever hated the Ducheſs; and as for de Cevennes, I ever regarded him with abhorrence!" She haſtily roſe. The Duke, aſtoniſhed,

aſtoniſhed, caught hold of her wriſt, and pulled her back. "You ſpeak in riddles, Lady Louiſe!"—"Ah! my impetuous nature!" replied ſhe, looking on him with a ſoftened expreſſion in her eyes, and allowing her hand to reſt in his; "I ſpeak in riddles, which, of all men living, I would not have you underſtand!" As ſhe ended, ſhe abruptly extricated herſelf, and darted out of the room.

Her eyes, had ſpoken too eloquently what they were meant to convey; and the Duke felt a little ſomething ſtrange at his heart: the idea that he was beloved by ſo young and beautiful a woman, gave a thrill there, which in the next moment diſappeared. Smiling at his own eaſy vanity, he gave a ſudden hem, as if to diſpel the deluſion of the ſyren. The deluſion was diſpelled: and walking up to Daun, he began to bet on the ſide of his niece, againſt de Cevennes.

Thus paſſed the morning, till the hour of dinner: during which unſocial meal, in remembrance of the cavilling at breakfaſt, an uncomfortable reſtraint hung on all their manners. With the deſſert and wine, a little

more hilarity prevailed: and the Vicomte, uneaſy at any approach to particular converſation, where ſo little friendſhip, and ſuch a ſpirit of wrangling exiſted amongſt the ſociety, propoſed ſongs, and led the way himſelf.

His example was followed by many: but no intreaties could prevail on the now melancholy Lady Louiſe to favour the company with a repetition of her melody. She ſighed as ſhe refuſed; and caſting down her trembling eyes, as the Duke united his ſolicitations, ſhe yet denied; and ended with ſaying, "My muſic is too much connected with my heart, not to be now completely diſcordant." —"What envious power," demanded Deaux-ponts, as he preſented to her a baſket of nectarines, "could diſturb the ſweet equanimity of that breaſt which charmed us all this morning?" She replied not, but only ſhook her head.

"Nay, tell me?" continued he in a tone of raillery. "If either of theſe Cavaliers have offended you, name him, and I will this moment bring him to your feet!" She ſmiled; and

and ſaid in a doubting voice, while in a well-affected confuſion ſhe cut her fruit to ſhreds upon her plate: Your Highneſs would ſhrink, did I demand your promiſe. But I am not quite ſo ſilly."

Hirchfeld ſat uneaſily. Perhaps, aſhamed of her late jilting conduct, ſhe was relenting; and oppreſſed by her own compunction, deſpaired of his forgiveneſs. The generous ſoul of the Rhinelander ſnatched at the thought. "My Lord Duke!" ſaid he, "if I have hurt Lady Louiſe—"—"You!" cried ſhe, interrupting him, with the moſt galling contempt pointing her voice and eyes; "the inſolence of young men is intolerable!" She roſe from her ſeat full of offended *hauteur*; and walked up to the window with the indignant air of one moſt cruelly inſulted.

"Lady Louiſe!" cried Hirchfeld, enraged at her behaviour, "had not your good mother left this Caſtle yeſterday, after the vows which you have ſworn to me in her preſence, you would not have dared to act ſo! If I have incurred your diſpleaſure by my too eager love—"—"Silence, Sir!" ſaid ſhe, almoſt

breathleſs with anger, and the incenſed tears ſtarting into her eyes; "is it not enough that my mother compelled me to receive addreſſes which were ever hateful to me, but you muſt inſult me before company; proclaim falſehoods of me; and, indeed, render me miſerable?"

As ſhe ended, ſhe dropped into a ſeat, and ſobbed aloud. The Duke ſtarted up; they all ſtarted up: and Hirchfeld paced the room, biting his lips, and beating his forehead, in a paroxyſm of rage: "O damned, inſidious women!" cried he. "Dear Hirchfeld!" ſaid Sigiſmund, laying his hand on his. "ſhe is unworthy of you: be calm."—"Be calm! I cannot!" cried he flying up to her, and dropping on his knees, he haſtily ſeized her hand, in ſpite of her ſtruggles to free it, and exclaimed, "O, Louiſe! what do you mean? How have I offended you, that you would thus not only rob me of yourſelf; but ſtamp me with diſgrace? Perfidious, dear, adored girl! you know you have often ſworn to love me; to be mine only!"

She ſuddenly ſprang away; then flinging him from her, exclaimed, "Is there no one here

here who will reſcue me from the perſecution of a wretch, whom I ever had but too much cauſe to hate?" As ſhe ſpoke, ſhe clung, as if in terror, to the arm of the Duke. His Highneſs felt as uneaſy, as ſurpriſed at this flagrant behaviour: but not poſſeſſing the extreme frankneſs of Sigiſmund's nature, which would have prompted him to leave her to herſelf; with an uncomfortable ſenſation he ſupported her out of the room.

Hirchfeld was ſtanding ſtamping in the midſt of the chamber. Seeing the languiſhing motions of his miſtreſs, as ſhe leaned on the arm of the Duke, and tottered through the door, he ſtruggled with Sigiſmund to follow them, uttering ten thouſand menaces againſt his Highneſs and himſelf. Deuxponts calmly waved his hand to him, and ſaid, "I will attend you and de Cevennes on the terrace in half an hour."

After much exertion on the part of Sigiſmund, he at length quieted the violence of the lover; and leading him into the park, they walked to and fro in the lawn, waiting for the arrival of the Duke.

"But, de Cevennes!" cried Hirchfeld, interrupting a remark which his friend had made, "we cannot always be reaſonable. Is ſhe not beautiful? Is ſhe not faſcinating?—My God! did not you yourſelf acknowledge to me that ſhe was the fineſt girl you ever ſaw?"—"I did," anſwered Sigiſmund, ſoftening his voice, to aſſuage the riſing tempeſt of his companion; "in perſonal charms ſhe has few competitors: but, Hirchfeld, when you are married, will that radiant complexion, thoſe brilliant eyes, and that graceful figure, form a ſufficient panacea for a ſhrewiſh temper and an eſtranged heart? If you would not be miſerable, you muſt give her up."

"I cannot!" reſolutely anſwered he, looking ſullenly on the ground. "You cannot!" repeated Sigiſmund; "you will not! you are greedy to graſp at your ſcourge. For ſhame, Hirchfeld! would you truſt your honour in the keeping of a woman who has once laid a ſnare for me, and is now plotting on the Duke?" During this rather heated remonſtrance the young Rhinelander only bit his lip. Sigiſmund proceeded in a milder tone.

"Obſerve

"Obſerve the difference between Louiſe and Lady Emma! How meretricious appear the charms of the one, when compared with the modeſt graces of the other! Louiſe, all flutter, or dying languors: Emma, ſoft, gentle, and ſincere! In the name of Heaven! if you are ſo fond of this troubleſome paſſion, make a transfer of it to the ſweet Wildenſtein!"—Hirchfeld ſmiled, and ſighed.

"Indeed I am ſerious," reſumed Sigiſmund: "only draw a compariſon between the two Ladies! In my opinion, for mere beauty they are nearly upon a par. Louiſe poſſeſſes the true Saxon lillies: Emma, the warmer tinge of more ſouthern climates. But what is the white or brown varniſh of complexion? Lay aſide their forms, for they are equal, and bring their minds to a parallel; and you deſerve diſgrace if Emma does not carry your heart."—"Heavens! how you talk!" exclaimed Hirchfeld, almoſt laughing: "you could not be cooler were you adviſing me how to chooſe an eſtate! But you are a novice: you have yet to learn that love and reaſon ſeldom meet. It is an involuntary impulſe, impelled by an inviſible force, whoſe power we feel,

feel, without defining it. It is—in ſhort, it makes man an idiot!"

"Not till he wills himſelf one," returned his young auditor: "truſt me, Count, *novice* as I am, I am morally certain, that there is no feeling of the human heart, which, however unaccountably awakened, and however head-long in its nature, but it may be either heightened or lowered, nay even ſubdued, by the exertion of a ſtrong reaſon."—Hirchfeld ſhook his head; and wheeling round to take another turn, his eyes met the Duke.

Deux-ponts did not wait till he was ſpoken to; but putting his hand through the unoccupied arm of the Rhinelander, ſaid with the expreſſion of philanthrophy glowing in his features, "Well, my Lords! you ſee I am here: I have at laſt, after ſtanding the attack of ſighs, ſobs, and hyſterics, eſcaped to make good my promiſe. The pretty little Louiſe, I believe, is fitter for confinement than my poor Roſamund!" Hirchfeld coloured. "I mean not to diſtreſs you, my young friend!" continued he, obſerving his fluſhed cheek: "did I think that the Lady we ſpeak of, is in the ſmalleſt degree worthy the affections of a man of

of honour, I ſhould have ſhuddered at mentioning her ſo lightly. But the reverſe; ſhe is a finiſhed adventureſs, a coquette, a jilt: what do you call it? You muſt know the hold you ought to have had on her faith.—The Vicomteſſe tells me that ſhe laid an abſolute ſiege to the Chevalier: and, as for myſelf, I ſuppoſe my titles, and affinity to crowned heads, have concealed from her eyes my age and my ſcars!"

"Say no more! ſay no more!" abruptly exclaimed Hirchfeld: "ſhe is indeed deſpicable! Shut up within her mother's Caſtle, I, being her firſt lover, was well received. My adorations tickled her vanity: ſhe loved me by her vanity! and by her vanity ſhe has rendered me wretched!"—"Say not ſo!" cried the Duke, looking in his chafed countenance: "be more juſt, and deſpiſe her for her vanity. The gradual progreſs of her coquetry is as clear as the light. Her firſt paſſion, for your idolatry, was ſubdued by the faſcination of novelty in the perſon of the Chevalier: and ambition, under my time-beaten form, has abſorbed you both. Think a moment! Is ſuch a woman worthy of a ſigh?"

"No,

"No, not of remembrance!" haſtily anſwered he, opening his breaſt, and tearing from his neck a gold locket: "there!" ſaid he, flinging it on the ground; "there is her hair! ſhe tied it on with her own hands, and ſmiled in my face as ſhe did it like a—devil! And there is her ring! and here is her bracelet!" cried he, caſting them all upon the graſs: "and I now abjure her for ever!"

Without waiting for a reply, he haſtily ruſhed from his friends, and darted into the Caſtle. "Poor Hirchfeld!" ſaid the Duke, as he looked after him; "we have applied a cauſtic to his wound: but it was neceſſary; and in the courſe of a few weeks he will thank us for it."—"I hope ſo!" ſighed Sigiſmund; "for I know not a better fellow in the world. Wild and eccentric as are his manners, his heart is too generous long to enſure his own perſonal ſafety. To ſpeak in the language of the poet, for his friend he *ſets his life at nought!*"—"Yes, I think him as brave as he is ardent; and therefore wiſh him a better fate than to be yoked with ſuch a gad-fly as is this Louiſe!"—"I heartily concur with your Highneſs," replied he; "but as here is Lady Emma

Emma approaching us, ſuppoſe we change the ſubject? An amiable woman feels any ſtab at a prominent folly of her ſex, as an indirect thruſt to herſelf."

"No: I cannot ſee the juſtice of that," anſwered the Duke, holding out his hand towards his niece: "this little girl, who is haſtening to meet us, youthful as ſhe is, is too conſcious of the invulnerable ſtrength of rectitude, to receive the arrows into her own breaſt, which were levelled at the turpitude of another. It is a faſtidious forbearance," continued he, putting her arm through his, "that heſitates to warn a woman of danger, when it can be done by merely expoſing to her eyes the deformity of a frailty, nearly bordering on vice. Were men more honeſt, we ſhould have fewer coquettes, fewer jilts; and conſequently more comfort in domeſtic life."

"Moſt probably your Highneſs is right," ſaid Sigiſmund. "When you are a longer liver, you will affirm it," returned he; "I have had much experience in the diſpoſitions of Ladies, reſident in almoſt all the European courts; and I muſt acknowledge, that I never yet met with a very young woman who was not

not grateful for thoſe friendly hints, which I, or any other man, would frankly offer to her, either for the removal of any growing error, or as a ſtimulative to perſevere, in ſpite of the malign example of others, in the path of right."

"I believe my uncle ſays true," obſerved Lady Emma. "In the uſual ſocieties of the world, men ſeem to have entered into an everlaſting war with women: hypocriſy and deceit are the weapons which they uſe. A woman is complimented, in her preſence, for thoſe very manners, at which, when ſhe is abſent, men laugh, and would loudly condemn, did the ſame conduct implicate themſelves, by being ſeen in a ſiſter. I cannot accuſe my own ſex of this illiberal fault. I have only to lament the too great pliability of their minds, which molds itſelf to the caprice of a tongue without truth. The miſchief ſtops not there; but they profeſs the opinions of men, in regard to licenſing thoſe follies and crimes with their approbation, which only by a proſcriptive and arbitrary will of the actors, not any peculiar law of heaven in their favour, they have dared to adopt—nay, to glory in! But ſuch

puſillanimous,

puſillanimous, if not guilty acquieſcence, may be expected. Woman is taught by man, that the whole cares of her life ought to be directed to the decorating of her perſon. Her mind is left to ſleep in its beautiful priſon: habit rivets with nature: no wonder then, that indolence bends in gratitude to its ſupporter, and bows like a ſlave to the imperious will of that flattering tyrant, who has fettered her to the earth."

The Duke ſmiled. "My dear girl, you are quite an enthuſiaſt this morning! I much doubt if ſomething highly derogatory to ſome one of the gentlemen in our party, has not been the cauſe?"—"No," anſwered ſhe, bluſhing all over at the lengths to which her ardour had hurried her; "not immediately a gentleman, but a lady: it was the recent behaviour of Lady Louiſe which introduced to my mind a train of reflections, leſs to the honour of thoſe who turned from her in contempt, than to the unhappy young creature whom they have injured by their adulation."

"Lady Emma," exclaimed Sigiſmund, "though not particularly in this inſtance of

Lady Louiſe, yet, in the general, your ſentiments exactly meet mine. If I may be ſo far an egotiſt, as to give my actions as a teſt of my principles, I will declare, that I always avoided thoſe indiſcriminate idolatries, thoſe villainous flatterings, which tarniſh our own hearts, while we cruelly intend to debaſe the minds of beings, who reſt their chief happineſs upon our veracity and honour." The Duke nodded his head; and Sigiſmund, ſtill warmed with his ſubject, proceeded.

" Indeed, ideas have often floated upon my brain, which tend to convince me that the reciprocal influence of the two ſexes, in the moral government of their minds, is of far more conſequence than the wiſdom of ſages have thought proper to adjudge. Let each exact, as the price of each other's eſteem, the active exertions of thoſe virtues which many denominate imaginary; but the ſeeds of which every man holds in his own breaſt.— Let women convince him of their beauty, their uſefulneſs, and their demands on her love. Let man exert the ſame fine principle with regard to her: and let us carry our ſpeculations of its power over the individual family,

mily, to the diſpoſition of the people condenſed to a public, and its potency will aſtoniſh you!"

Lady Emma ſmiled a pleaſed aſſent to this remark, and took his arm, as the Duke diſplaced her to receive the Vicomte and Vicomteſſe, who now joined them. The converſation acquired a general turn; and they continued walking about till the cloſing in of twilight ſhut them from the ſcene.

CHAP. IV.

" But why muſt thoſe be thought to 'ſcape, that feel
Thoſe rods of ſcorpions, and thoſe whips of ſteel,
Which conſcience ſhakes, when ſhe with rage controuls,
And ſpreads amazing terrors thro' their ſouls?
Not ſharp revenge, nor hell itſelf can find
A fiercer torment than a guilty mind,
Which day and night, doth dreadfully accuſe,
Condemns the wretch, and ſtill the charge renews."

JUVENAL.

DURING the remainder of the evening, the decided contempt of the young Rhinelander towards herſelf, irritated the vexed paſſions of Louiſe to a foreneſs hardly to be endured. Her vanity felt a latent gratification at his re-

proaches of the morning, becauſe they had ſpoken the power of her charms: but to ſee him anſwer the firſt caſual queſtion which ſhe happened to put to him, by a ſhrug of the ſhoulder, a drop of his lip, and, "I do not know, Madam." Beſides, his immediately turning to Lady Emma, and laviſhing on her thoſe very aſſiduities which had lately been all dedicated to herſelf, galled her with envy, though ſhe now hated the juſtly incenſed Hirchfeld: when again turning her batteries, firſt on Deux-ponts, and then on Sigiſmund, her mortified pride received freſh fuel for diſpleaſure.

The conſtrained politeneſs of the Duke, and the cold indifference of the Chevalier, drove her to deſperation; and bouncing from her ſeat, ſhe flew to the harpſichord; when, without any attention to the annoyance of the company, ſhe began, and went through practiſing ſeveral difficult cromatic concertos of Handel, which ſhe played in ſo disjointed and diſcordant a ſtyle, that at laſt the impatience of the Vicomteſſe overcame her reſpect to ceremony, and going up to her Ladyſhip, "For Heaven's ſake," cried ſhe, "Lady Louiſe, without you wiſh to be flayed alive by the lo-

vers

vers of harmony, do not continue ſuch a caricature of muſic!" Lady Louiſe made no reply; but riſing up with a contemptuous laugh, ſauntered to a ſopha, and flinging herſelf at full length upon it, began playing and talking with the Count's dogs, as they barked and leaped over her proſtrate figure.

This new ſpecies of noiſe, diſcompoſed the nerves of all preſent. Hirchfeld bluſhed at her conduct, while he propoſed, as a ſilencer and general amneſty, a round game at cards. The table was called for; and Lady Louiſe ſummoned by the Counteſs to join the circle: but this ſhe refuſed, without deigning to look up to her Ladyſhip, as ſhe anſwered, but ſtill continued tickling a little yelping pug; and when the Counteſs again preſſed her, "No," ſaid ſhe, "I prefer my preſent amuſement. If your Ladyſhip cannot make up your party without me, I am ſorry for it; but theſe dear little animals are my companions for the night!" The Counteſs turned away. The company ſeating themſelves at cards, many of the aſſembly tried, by their own boiſterous mirth, to drown the more haraſſing noiſe of the dogs.

The Vicomteſſe, whoſe many recent hours of uneaſineſs had rendered her nerves uncommonly irritable, moſt painfully felt the effect of this uproar. Her head ached; and, wearied to abſolute melancholy, ſhe whiſpered the Count her deſire to be excuſed for that evening from keeping her appointment in his cloſet; and riſing, complained of a ſlight indiſpoſition, wiſhed them all a good night, and was preparing to leave the room, when Sigiſmund haſtily roſe, and leading her out, went with her to the door of her dreſſing-room, where her women were already in waiting.

"My dear boy," ſaid ſhe, kiſſing his cheek, "God bleſs you!"—"I fear you are very ill!" cried he with real anxiety.—"No," ſaid her Ladyſhip, ſtill detaining his hand in hers: the very indecent behaviour of Lady Louiſe, for I cannot give it a gentler epithet, has oppreſſed my ſpirits heavily: but do not be alarmed. The effects of ſhame for another, when that other forgets to bluſh for herſelf, are ſoon diſperſed. I thank Heaven that ſhe is no daughter of mine, neither any favourite of yours! Either calamity would break my heart! Poor Lady Erfurt!"—"Ah! poor Lady

Lady Erfurt!" ſaid Sigiſmund. "I pity the mother of ſuch a girl, but I do not diſtreſs myſelf for either: and do you the ſame," added he, kiſſing the hands of his protectreſs; "I have ſufficiently afflicted that dear breaſt!" "Theodore!" ejaculated ſhe, ſtraining him to her boſom; and then, ſmiling upon him with all the eloquence of maternal affection, departed into her chamber, and a ſervant cloſed the door.

I have no occaſion to return to that diſagreeable ſupper-room," muttered he to himſelf, as he croſſed the corridor, and turned into an adjoining gallery: "I will go to Madame Stahl."

He walked on: in the veſtibule of the ſtate-chambers, which are in the ſouth tower, he muſed for a moment; and recollecting the probability that ſhould he be miſſed from the commerce-table, perhaps he might again be ſought for in the apartment of the houſekeeper; when, ſhould he be found there, the moſt diſagreeable conſequences might enſue: He wiſhed to avoid even the chance of ſuch a premature eclairciſſement; and the conſecration in which theſe very

very chambers were always held, becauſe of the imperial gueſts whom they had ſheltered; aſſured him, that could Madame Stahl be brought here, they might hold their conference unſuſpected, and undiſturbed.

He directly went to his own room; when, taking a ſlip of paper, he wrote:

"Deareſt Madam: I fear for your quiet, ſhould we be diſcovered converſing together. If you will condeſcend to come immediately to the ſtate-chambers, I think we ſhall there be in perfect ſecurity: and you will meet

Your moſt affectionate

S——"

11 o'clock, night.

He folded this note up in a neckcloth; and ringing his bell, ordered his valet, who appeared, to carry that handkerchief which he had borrowed to the houſe-keeper; and, in his name, thank her for the uſe of it. As the man took it, Sigiſmund told him he need not come near him any more that night; being rather indiſpoſed he was going directly to-bed, and would not require his uſual attendance.

As

As ſoon as the ſervant was completely out of hearing, he locked his room-door, to prevent any accidental detection; and taking the key with him, returned to the ſtate-chambers. He ſeated himſelf near the window of the apartment in which the royal Thereſa had ſlept, in thoſe days when his father was the happy Lord of the Caſtle. The pale rays of the moon poured through the ſmall compartments of glaſs which interſected the heavy ſtone-work of the caſement: a few flickering gleams gave a wan and ſilvery light to the gilded cornices and high plumes of the purple canopy; beneath which, the ſepulchral gloom of the bed, and its former ſplendour, ſo ſtrongly reminded him of the fate of his family, that with a playful kind of grief, which is not the leſs poignant becauſe it bends to the imagination, he wound his arms together.

"A few years back," thought he, "how different was this ſcene!" He proceeded in his reflections; and pictured this very chamber, when the luſtres were blazing with lights, the ſurrounding ſofas covered with beautiful women; and the moſt lovely of thoſe beauties, the royal Thereſa, lying on that bed, ſpreading,

ſpreading, with her wit and ſmiles, chearfulneſs and joy through every breaſt. This was: but now darkneſs reſted on every object.—The ſofas were deſolate: and that lofty bed ſtood like a vaſt unoccupied hearſe, frowning on all around.

So ſplendid was his houſe! So gay, ſo joyous, were once his proſpects! but now the broad pall of death had dropped between them; and with his father, his brother, had cloſed out his happineſs for ever. He did not ſhudder at this gloomy retroſpection: but his ſoul drooped within him. The ſilent tears rolled drop after drop over his cheeks, trickling upon the hand which ſupported his head. All ſeemed ſtill within his breaſt; and he almoſt thought his life was melting away in theſe tears.

The ſound of a footſtep in the veſtibule rouſed him reluctantly from this diſſolving ſorrow. It was Madame Stahl. She held a ſmall taper in her hand. Shutting the door behind her, ſhe took a ſeat beſide him. She preſſed her hand gently in his; while ſhe ſaid, "I thank you, my beſt love! for your note: and

to

to ſhew you that I approve of your plan, you ſee I have obeyed it."—"You are all goodneſs," anſwered Sigiſmund. "Rather ſay, all affection," returned ſhe: "I would have my claims upon your love, not on your gratitude."—"Of all of my affection, which I can take from heaven," anſwered he, ſighing profoundly, "you have the firſt ſhare. Did I not love you, I could not love the memory of my adored brother, to whom you were ſo dear!"—"And to prove that I was not unworthy of his love;" ſaid ſhe, giving into his hand, a ſmall manuſcript; "in theſe few ſheets, you will find all of me but my real name."

"And why not your real name?" aſked Sigiſmund, in a faltering voice, hardly conſcious that his lips had uttered the queſtion his heart dictated, while he held the packet in his hands, and gazed on the cover, as if his eyes could at one view penetrate the whole contents. "Becauſe," replied ſhe, "there is one of Blackenberg's gueſts, to whom my name muſt not be breathed. If he knew that exiſted within this caſtle, I ſhould be forced

to

to quit it and you."—"Is that gueſt, the Duke?" ſuddenly demanded Sigiſmund.——"Do not aſk me!" anſwered ſhe; "though I have every reaſon to revere the man whom I dread, I dare not name him, even to you." She ceaſed for a moment, then proceeded.—"As a farther requeſt, let me entreat, that whatever you find written in that paper, you will never mention a tittle of it, without firſt appriſing me?"—"I promiſe, upon my honour!" returned her auditor, whoſe ſurpriſe at the ſtrangeneſs of this incident, did not in the leaſt ſhake his dependance on her truth.

"Then, read that, when you are retired:" ſaid ſhe; "with my ſad hiſtory, you will find much of your dear father; and more, of your as dear brother."—"I had hoped ſo," replied Sigiſmund; "for I wiſhed, (but your requeſt put it out of my power,) after I had myſelf peruſed your narrative, if any thing in it concerned my birth, to give it to the Vicomte; with any other documents which you might collect, to identify my being the ſon of Count Koningſtein. Could I have done this, I ſhould immediately deſire him to aſſert my rights; and afford me an opportunity of giving to

Blackenberg

Blackenberg a public punishment for his crimes."

"I thank God!" cried she with fervour, "that you at last see through the flimsy prejudice of the Vicomte's excess of honor!—Now, I shall behold justice executed on the deepest villain that ever disgraced the earth?"—She threw herself back in her chair, and for a few minutes remained perfectly silent. At length, starting up, she said in hurrying accents, "Dearest Sigismund! for another day, or perhaps a few more, I must postpone this avowal."—"You! Why!" asked he, in an alarmed voice; thunderstruck at hearing any objection from her.

"I see your astonishment," cried she; "but I fear my caution is necessary. The truth is; this same visitor who prevents me declaring myself, also disconcerts my plan of proceeding! I am your principal witness; and should I now appear in my real rank, the suspicions and explanations which must ensue, would obscure the veracity of my evidence, and perhaps cause it to be doubted. Wait then, for three days, until I have subsided the present

tumult in my mind; and if at the end of that time I cannot arrange my thoughts for your benefit, I will tell you who I am; boldly announce you as the heir of Koningſtein; and let my character ſtand the ordeal of a public trial."

"My deareſt Madam!" cried Sigiſmund, flinging himſelf at her feet; in the name of God! tell me all you mean? or tell me nothing! Theſe half confeſſions diſtract me. O! what am I to think?"—"Not any thing to my diſhonour, Sigiſmund," returned ſhe, in a ſerious but calm tone. "When you have read the paper which you carry with you, you will yet believe me virtuous."—"I do! I do!" cried he, riſing, and throwing himſelf into the ſofa: "but I am wretched; very wretched!" She made no reply; but ſat looking on him, with ten thouſand fluctuating feelings tearing her heart.

Their ſilence remained nearly half an hour. Deep and broken ſighs only told to each other that they were preſent; yet their ſouls were together. They both wiſhed to ſay ſomething to each other; but neither knew what to

to ſpeak. Their hearts were full of emotions; but all combination of words ſeeemed to fly their tongues. At laſt, wiſhing to break the ſilence, and really almoſt fainting for want of refreſhment, Sigiſmund haſtily raiſed his head, and forcing a ſmile upon his lips, he ſaid, "My dear Madam, can you find for me a little bread and ſome wine; for in truth I am ſick for want of ſomething! I have not taſted any thing to-day, but a few cinnamon comfits which Hirchfeld gave to me."—"Yes," returned ſhe; "I will bring any thing to you that you deſire. But why do you do this?—O my God!" ſuddenly ejaculated ſhe, "you dread to be poiſoned."—"I do," replied he; "and therefore I muſt owe my ſuſtenance to you. Bring me a loaf of bread, and two or three bottles of wine. I will keep them in my portmanteau, and ſteal, like a penitentiary, to my ſolitary and ſcanty fare."

"O my dear, perſecuted boy!" ſaid ſhe; turning her weeping eyes upon the aſſumed gaiety of his features: "but you muſt be faint. I will return in a few minutes."

" She darted out of the room; and before he had hardly time to read the firſt ten lines of her little recital, ſhe was come back. He put the paper into his boſom, while ſhe ſet down a ſmall baſket, with three bottles of Madeira, and ſeveral little loaves. She poured out half a goblet of wine, and immediately gave it to him with a cake, deſiring him to eat it. When he took them from her hands, ſhe turned from him, and walked up to the window, to hide a paſſionate burſt of tears which ruſhed from her eyes, at the ſight of the only exiſting ſon of Koningſtein, ſinking for want of ſuſtenance even within the walls of his father's houſe. But that father was no more. His child was deſolate. The deſpoiler of his poſſeſſions threatened him with death! Her heart ſtruggled within her boſom. She could have groaned for miſery: but a ſudden conviction of the preſumption of her deſpair, fell like a burning cauſtic on her ſoul; and ſhuddering leſt her impiety ſhould implicate another in her puniſhment, and pluck on her innocent charge a temporary abandonment by his Creator, ſhe breathed a fervent prayer to heaven, which carried with it tears of blood from

from her heart: then turning round, ſhe walked tranquilly towards the table.

Sigiſmund had finiſhed his repaſt, and cloſed down the cover of his little baſket. "My dear love!" ſaid ſhe, "I will not detain you longer from your chamber. Take this baſket with you; and before it wants repleniſhing, our fates will be decided ſome way."—"My fate," ſaid he emphatically, "with my will ſhall never influence yours with evil. We are to be happy, as we are miſerable, together." "Ah!" cried ſhe, "were you but out of the power of Blackenberg; my own diſcomforts I ſhould hardly feel!"—"Yes, Madame Stahl, I will be out of his power!" cried Sigiſmund, preſſing both her hands to his lips; "and you, deareſt of women! ſhall ſhare with me the conſolation of dragging a criminal to juſtice, and in poſſeſſing——"

A violent ruſtling amongſt the drapery of the bed made him ſtart. Catching the ſinking Leopoldina in his arms, he exclaimed, "Who is there?" A yet louder noiſe was the only reply he received. Madame Stahl raiſed herſelf from his ſhoulder; and with a faint ſmile

paſſing over her mouth, ſaid, "What a fool I am?—perhaps it is ſome cat?"—"I will ſoon ſee if it is any thing elſe!" cried he, drawing his ſword, and ſpringing to the bed. He drew aſide the curtains; looked behind it, under it, but no living thing was there. He quietly ſheathed his weapon, and ſaid, it muſt be rats, which might have eſcaped through ſome obſcure aperture in the wall.

Madame Stahl became quite compoſed. Sigiſmund affectionately bidding her a good night, gave her the taper; and taking up his baſket, ſhe turned down the gallery to her own apartments: and he proceeded, by the feeble light of the ſtars, for the moon had now ſet, to his own chamber.

Sigiſmund did not open his eyes the next morning till the inceſſant buſtle in the galleries round his chamber convinced him that he had ſlept far beyond his uſual hour. He looked at his watch; it was near twelve. Aſtoniſhed at the heavineſs of his ſleep, he ſprang out of bed; haſtily dreſſed himſelf: and ſwallowed his bread and wine.

The

The narrative of Leopoldina lay upon his pillow, bliſtered with the many tears which he had ſhed over it. He took it up, and replaced it in his boſom; flung himſelf on his knees before heaven, to beſeech a bleſſing upon the amiable and unfortunate writer. He then opened his chamber door, and deſcended to the breakfaſt-room. The Count Daun ſat alone, reading by the ſide of the fire. At the entrance of Sigiſmund, he puſhed back his chair, to make room for him to come near. He obeyed the ſign; and leaning againſt the pillar of the chimney-piece, was proceeding to inquire after his Lordſhip's health; when Daun, putting down his book, roſe alſo, and laying his hand on his ſhoulder; "My good fellow!" ſaid he, with a ſignificant movement of his head; "there is a dreadful cabal againſt you in this houſe." Sigiſmund neither ſtarted nor changed colour. He was only ſurpriſed to find, that the Count Daun ſhould be acquainted with ſuch cloſe concealed-villainy.

"I ſee that you are not intimidated at the knowledge of danger; ſo I will tell you how I became privy to it." He looked round the room with a ſcrutinizing glance; and then began

began in a lowered voice: "I was examining whether this chamber might not be equally traitorous to me, as were the walls of the crimſoned ſaloon to my hoſt, and his honeſt companions!—You will perceive I have been a liſtener, though not deſignedly. Prowling about the caſtle this morning about nine o'clock in queſt of ſome amuſement, I chanced to diſcover the door of a library, which opens out of the crimſon-ſaloon. Without any ceremony I went in; and had not been many minutes turning over the leaves of a Tacitus, when I heard the voice of the Ducheſs Saxe Zeits, as ſhe entered the door of the adjoining chamber. I neither wiſhed to diſturb her, nor be myſelf diſturbed; ſo I ſat ſtill while ſhe continued ſpeaking.

"Lady Louiſe," cried ſhe, "this is a tremendous diſcovery. The Count's honour is menaced: beſides, I am as confident as you are, that this woman, this Madame Stahl, is the abandoned miſtreſs of de Cevennes.—A fooliſh coxcomb! to fix his affections upon a menial! a creature, ſo much beneath the ſlighteſt notice from a gentleman!—But this baſe infatuation truly accounts for his inſolent neglect of your ladyſhip."—"Oh, Madam!"

dam!" anſwered Lady Louiſe, pettiſhly; "I am not piqued by his neglect of me; his aſſiduities were always below my contempt?—I ſhould not have troubled myſelf to mention his infamy, had not juſtice to the Count overcome my natural reluctance to meddle in ſo ridiculous a buſineſs.—I muſt confeſs, a ſenſe of the indignity offered to Lord Blackenberg's houſe, by de Cevennes preſuming to retain women of corrupted characters within its walls, ſtimulated me to — to — to ſay what I have ſaid."—"You are only juſt, my lovely friend!" anſwered her Highneſs; "and happy am I, that I had the good fortune to intrude on your dreſſing-room this morning, when I diſcovered you in tears; tears, which will ever do honour to your humanity! The woman who weeps for the tranſgreſſions of a frail ſiſter, deſerves the adoration of all mankind!"

"How long ſhe would have run on, thus rhapſodizing, I cannot tell," continued Daun, "had not Blackenberg's entrance put a ſtop to her theme?—Having heard your name mentioned ſo ſtrangely, and as fortune had thrown me into that receſs, I determined not to

to reject her kindneſs, but to attend to all that might paſs.

" The Ducheſs firſt began: " Come, Lady Louiſe! now we have requeſted an audience of the Count, tell him what you have ſeen." " My Lord!" anſwered the girl in a ſtammering voice; " laſt night, when I quitted the ſupper-room ſo abruptly, I felt myſelf indiſpoſed, and was going to my chamber. In proceeding along the cedar-gallery, a blaſt from one of the loop-holes extinguiſhed my candle. In this diſtreſs, I ſaw a Lady at ſome diſtance, with a taper in her hand. Thinking her one of our company, but I could not diſcern which, from the feebleneſs of her candle, I purſued as faſt as I could after her, to aſk for a light. She walked quicker than I did; made an abrupt turn; and I loſt her in a moment: I was in total darkneſs: for ſome time I wandered about, trying to find my way back; but ſo many paſſages bewildered me; and I was juſt opening my lips to call out, hoping that ſome perſon would hear me, when I thought I heard the Chevalier's voice. I liſtened; and the ſound proceeded from the room on my right ſide: I felt about; the

arras

arras ſhook at my touch, and gently lifting the thick tapeſtry, I perceived a glimmering light: raiſing it ſtill higher, I reſted it on my ſhoulders, and held it firm by one hand, while, with the other, I put a curtain back, which ſeemed the only obſtacle to impede my view of the room: I then ſaw de Cevennes ſitting by the ſide of a table, leaning his head on his hand; and the ſame Lady whom I had ſeen with the taper, ſtanding at the window, with her back to him. I ſtood for a few moments, while they remained in theſe attitudes. At laſt ſhe turned round; and coming up to him, called him her *dear love;* and uttered a thouſand abſurd things. De Cevennes ſpoke equally like a fool; kiſſing her hands, and ſwearing no power ſhould ever divide them: they then both abuſed your Lordſhip; talked about dragging criminals to juſtice; and flying from you. Irritated at this, with my anger I agitated the curtains, and made ſome buſtle: the Lady fainted; and the furious Chevalier, in his hurry to diſcover the intruder, would have run me through the heart, had I not ſlipped under the arras, and flew without ſtopping, till I reached the lighted corridor, and then found my way to my chamber."

" All

" All this time Blackenberg reſted ſilent: but when ſhe concluded, he broke out into the moſt infernal imprecations: then ſuddenly ſtopping, he exclaimed, " Lady Louiſe! do you know this meddling Jezebel?"—" Her name is Stahl," anſwered ſhe: " the Ducheſs tells me ſhe is your Lordſhip's houſekeeper. '

" He made no reply: but drawing in his breath between his gnaſhed teeth, and ſtamping furiouſly on the floor, he caſt himſelf ſhuddering into a chair. Count! Count!" cried the Ducheſs, running up to him: " what, are you afraid?"—" No, no," anſwered he, ſhaking her off; " hell could not make me afraid! But this woman! what may ſhe not have told?"—" Every thing," ſaid her Highneſs, in a hiſſing kind of whiſper: " that ſhe ought not—and the ſooner ſhe and he are diſpatched, the better!" Louiſe ſcreamed aloud, " O Heaven! what do you mean?"—" Huſh!" ſaid the Ducheſs; " you miſtake me. I do not intend to injure their perſons; but to have them driven from the Caſtle."—" Driven from the Caſtle! reiterated her Ladyſhip."

" I ſuppoſe

I ſuppoſe the Count dreaded ſome bad effects from her emotions; for, ſoftening his voice, he ſaid, "Do you, my gentle friend, withdraw, and compoſe yourſelf; your ſweet ſpirits are ſoon alarmed; be aſſured this fooliſh young man ſhall meet with no ill; I would only frighten him; but the woman ſhall be puniſhed to the extent of her crime: mercy here would be injuſtice to the cauſe of virtue." "Indeed, my Lord," obſerved Louiſe, "you ſay right; the woman is doubly culpable, and ought to be turned from the Caſtle, as a creature too infamous to harbour: but to do the ſame by the Chevalier," ſaid ſhe, "would be rather ridiculous: and he cannot be chaſtized for his meanneſs in a better way, than by flinging out of doors the object of his abſurd paſſion."

"I approve of your ſcheme," anſwered Blackenberg: "be your Ladyſhip ſecret: watch this fooliſh pair; and for ever command my friendſhip. In conſideration of your ſweet pleadings, I will ſink the remembrance of his *abuſing me*. You are too generous, Lady Louiſe: but do me the favour to withdraw; and in the meanwhile the Ducheſs and I will

conſult what is to be done with regard to ſo great a breach of hoſpitality. Surely for ſo diſgracing a circumſtance he ought to be ridiculed."—" Juſt ſo!" cried ſhe: " ſo grovelling a ſpirit deſerves contempt: and what more I hear of either, your Lordſhip ſhall be told."

" She cloſed the door after her; and the Ducheſs abruptly broke out: " Poor little wretch!" exclaimed ſhe, " I ſee ſhe half repents of the confidence ſhe has beſtowed. Indeed I extorted it from her.—Luckily for our plans, I was paſſing her room-door this morning: I heard her ſobbing, and ejaculating the name of Theodore: I went in; and aided by the anger of her own jealouſy, received into my *faithful boſom* her *tender tale*." She laughed brutiſhly, as ſhe mimicked the words of Louiſe; and then went on: " I ſee ſhe fears that we will drive him from her altogether: we muſt get her off this ſuſpicion: we muſt humour her, that ſhe may ſubmit to be uſeful."

With all my heart," anſwered the Count; " but the ſooner the buſineſs is done, the better.

better. The turbulence of the young man's temper wearies me of my life: beſides, by the thouſand inſolent ſpeeches which he has dared to make to me, I am ſure he knows of our deſigns againſt him: and in fact, I rather fear he has made that tramontane Rhinelander his confidant."—"Ah!" cried the Ducheſs, burſting into another laugh, "I will have vengeance on him too: I mean not to dip my hands in his blood; but I can torture his heart: I will make this ſilly Louiſe ſpike it through and through."—"But firſt let us finiſh de Cevennes!" interrupted Blackenberg impatiently: "he ſticks in my throat moſt confoundedly: I poiſoned two cups in the courſe of yeſterday; and he has eſcaped them both."—"Yes, yes," cried her Highneſs, "he more than ſuſpects our plans: it muſt have been he who made that noiſe in the room adjoining mine: he has overheard all we ſaid; ſo, by Heaven! we will keep no terms with him! by this day-week he ſhall be dead!"

"I wiſh you would do more than denounce it," ſaid the Count in a ſullen tone. "I would, had I the ſtrength which you

poſſeſs," replied ſhe: "I would attack him hand to hand. But, as we wave that, I will try the cup; though I never ſee him taſte any thing at table. I fear the poiſon is a bad ſcheme."—"Well then, by to-night let us conſider for a better: for the ſame fate that we adjudge to him, Stahl ſhall receive."—"That is as you pleaſe," anſwered the Ducheſs; "and for fear our abſence is obſerved, go you and join the company in the breakfaſt-room. I will follow you in a few moments: ſhould we go in together, ſtrange ſuſpicions might be excited."

"The infamous Count acquieſced. They left the room. I ſhortly after met them at breakfaſt. What a ſmooth-tongued villain he is! But for her—O I have long learnt to curſe the female heart! After their meal was diſpatched; and the company parted to the Billiard-rooms, I remained here with my book, hoping that you would come firſt to this apartment, as you have done, and ſo I might appriſe you of your danger."

A long pauſe now enſued. Sigiſmund, at laſt, pale with dread for Madame Stahl, broke ſilence: "I thank you, my Lord, for this diſcovery.

diſcovery. I know Blackenberg hates me, becauſe he believes that I am dangerous to him: but, by the providence of God, all his plans hitherto have proved abortive; and I muſt only take care to preſerve the deareſt of women." —" I am ſorry there is any truth in that part of the ſtory," added the Count, his benevolent look bending to a lour: " young men ought to be wary of their paſſions, and aſhamed of theſe connections."—" Any connection, my Lord! that you could reprobate would be deteſtable to me. The jealouſy of Lady Louiſe, and the foul conſcience of the Ducheſs, have ſtamped the moſt perfect of women with principles foreign to her heart, but too well known to themſelves. That I love Madame Stahl, I do not deny: but I love her with the affection of a ſon: and ſhe deſerves it; for ſhe has been more to me than the mother who gave me life. She cheriſhed me when my own parent had forgotten me. To rear my infancy, ſhe—O what has ſhe not relinquiſhed!"

" De Cevennes!" exclaimed Daun, aſtoniſhed at his vehemence, " I believe you. The aſſeverations of innocence carry conviction

with them. Tell Madame Stahl of her danger; and to-morrow morning by day-break my carriage ſhall be at the other ſide of the park: unknown to any one but ourſelves, I will take her to a friend of mine, who lives at Dreſden: it not being above twenty miles from hence, I can, with briſk driving, be back here again by noon: my ſervants I can depend on: when I return, I will leave my equipage, and walk in with the air of one juſt come off a ſtroll."

"Thank you! thank you!" cried Sigiſmund, his eyes ſparkling with gratitude, and preſſing the Count's hand between his: "As early as I dare ſeek her, I will acquaint dear Madame Stahl with your goodneſs: I am certain ſhe will be happy to render me eaſy, by throwing herſelf upon your protection."—"And now for your own ſafety."—"We can conſult concerning that afterwards," anſwered he: "only, for reaſons which ſhall in future be explained, I conjure you not to mention any thing of what has paſſed; not even to the Duke, nor to the Vicomte. When your Lordſhip returns from Dreſden, I will unravel much; perhaps all."

"Well!"

"Well!" ſaid the Count, "at preſent I acquieſce; but Blackenberg ſhall not reſt in his villainy. When we have ſome ſtronger proofs of his crime than mere menaces, it will be time to ſeize him: only beware, leſt we ſummon juſtice when it is too late."—"When we have placed Madame Stahl beyond all danger,' anſwered Sigiſmund; "then I will collect my own wrongs, and avenge them. Till then, I am ſtill."

Daun would again have ſpoken; but the ſudden appearance of Hirchfeld and Lady Emma ſtopped him. Hirchfeld took the arm of his friend, as he reluctantly yielded that of the lovely Wildenſtein to the commanding eye of the veteran general; who, puſhing open the door which led into the park, walked out himſelf, and the reſt mechanically followed him.

CHAP. V.

"—— Tell me, mine own!
"Where haſt thou been preſerv'd?
Where liv'd? Where found?"

WINTER'S TALE.

As they ſauntered ſilently along the ſkirts of the lawn, the Vicomteſſe obſerved them from

from the windows of her dreſſing-room; and opening one of them ſhe called to the Chevalier. The whole party drew up beneath the caſement, while her Ladyſhip leaning out, ready habited, aſked Theodore to accompany her in a ride. "I have ordered my horſes," ſaid ſhe; "to gratify my whim of galloping over the country this morning, my Lord kindly conſented to go with me; but he now repents of his condeſcenſion, and refuſes: ſo, my dear boy, I petition you?"—"And I ſhall moſt readily attend your Ladyſhip," replied Sigimund.

Lady Emma begged to be admitted one of the party; and Count Daun immediately ſaid, he would go alſo, as he wiſhed to have a little ſober converſation with the niece of his friend. By this time Lady Louiſe had joined the circle; and hearing the arrangement, ſhe determined not to be left behind.

Her inflammable heart, proud as it was, could not entirely relinquiſh its predeliction for the Chevalier. His beautiful countenance, his graceful figure, and touching deportment, all held ſuch a ſpell over her, that notwith-

notwithſtanding the glory of the Duke's titles had eclipſed his faſcinations for a day, it was only for a day. The ſlight repulſe of his Highneſs had ſtruck the tender chord of her boſom, and it reverberated back with tenfold energy. Her ſoul in this condition, haraſſed by the contempt which ſhe had received from the three; from the dear idol of her love; to ſurpriſe him offering thoſe prized affections to another! It was madneſs to remember! And now never, never to loſe ſight of him, was her reſolve.—She haſtily ran, and ordered that her horſe ſhould be ready with the reſt.

In this manner the group increaſed ſo faſt, that when they were mounted, and Sigiſmund came to his hunter, he looked round, and felt chafed at the ſight of ſuch a regiment, when he expected a little ſocial party only. But how much more was he vexed, when he ſaw Blackenberg ride out of the court-yard, and tell the Counteſs, as ſhe ſtood in the porch, that he would take the whole company on the Dreſden road as far as the Margrave of Miſnia's little villa; they ſhould dine there, and return before night!

Sigiſmund

Sigiſmund immediately drew his foot from the ſtirrup. "Theodore!" cried the Vicomteſſe, "where are you going?"—"Do excuſe me from this ride? aſked he, in a voice of trepidation; trembling at the improbability of his being able to ſee and acquaint Madame Stahl of her peril. "Excuſe you, dear Theodore!" exclaimed her Ladyſhip, covering her ſtarting tears with her hand.—"My dear Vicomteſſe!" cried Sigiſmund, flying to her ſide, and ſeizing her other hand. She ſtruggled to extricate it, crying, "Leave me! Leave me! It is enough!"—"What is enough?" exclaimed he; "O! my dear, dear Madam! do not miſtake me? Only ſuffer me to withdraw into the caſtle for a few minutes, and I will return?"—"No, Theodore," ſaid ſhe, ſhaking her head; "I would not force you!"—"You will not force me. I beſeech you to let me accompany you! Do! elſe I ſhall think that you are angry with me?"—"Ah! no," returned the Vicomteſſe; "you know well that all my anger is affection. Go, deareſt boy! and I will wait for you."

He

He haſtily kiſſed her hand; and hurrying up to Hirchfeld, who was prancing his charger before the pleaſed eyes of Lady Emma, he called to him to reſt; but he called in vain; till after a few more curvets and boundings, his ſpectatreſs was obliged to obey the beckon of the Count Daun. As ſhe directed her horſe towards the General, he ſtopped and demanded of Sigiſmund, what he wanted? "I will tell you when you are diſmounted." Hirchfeld immediately ſprang off his ſaddle; and they went into the Caſtle together.

Sigiſmund now told his friend the whole ſtory. When he repeated what the Ducheſs had ſpoken concerning her vengeance on him, he treated her threat with contempt, though he moſt boiſterouſly beſtowed on her many of thoſe epithets which ſhe ſo juſtly deſerved. He readily conſented to remain at home, to be of ſervice to *a lady*; and ſat laughing at and abuſing the Ducheſs, while Sigiſmund wrote the following haſty note to Leopoldina:—

"My deareſt Madam! We were obſerved laſt night; and all our converſation was reported to the Count. He has formed a plan

on

on your life; and for my ſake, my much loved, my beſt friend! conſent to fly from this Caſtle! God and my own prudence will preſerve me. The worthy Count Daun has promiſed to be your protector. Prepare to be ready by break of day to-morrow morning. His carriage will await you behind the north wood; and he will conduct you in ſafety to Dreſden. For God's ſake! comply with this requeſt as you love your affectionate

S———."

This letter he wafered; and giving it to Hirchfeld, begged him to deliver it ſecretly to Madame Stahl; to add to its implorings his own entreaties; and to aſſiſt her in preparing for her flight.

Hirchfeld told him he might depend on him; and putting the letter into his pocket, he deſcended with him to the platform. Sigiſmund vaulted into his ſaddle, and looking heavily at the Caſtle, turned the head of his horſe, and for ſome time rode ſilently by the ſide of the Vicomteſſe.

The

The day paſſed away moſt unpleaſantly to Sigiſmund. His amiable patroneſs was melancholy; and notwithſtanding his moſt earneſt exertions, he could not raiſe more than a languid ſmile, which would play on her lips while her eyes yet ſwam in tears. His heart told him he had pained hers; and the idea that he muſt ſtill longer hold her in ignorance, ſunk upon his mind, and weighed down the little vivacity which he forced. For the remainder of the journey, they rode ſide by ſide in perfect ſilence. Sigiſmund would ſigh frequently. The Vicomteſſe, grieved for the ſecret ſorrow which ſeemed to prey on him, bent her head down; and ſuffered her faſt and ſcalding tears to drop upon the neck of her horſe.

They dined at the villa. The Margravine was there alone. A mere ſtiff, haughty, woman of quality; had little conciliating in her manners; and the Vicomteſſe, rendered doubly unhappy at ſeeing her adopted ſon, who ſat cloſe by Blackenberg, refuſe every refreſhment that he offered him, ſat mute, compreſſing within her boſom the thronging ſobs which roſe to her lips.

In their ride back all grew ſtill more dreary: the clouds had collected over the ſky; a depreſſing humidity which hung in the air, penetrated their garments, and ſtifled their reſpiration. The Count and Ducheſs, with the Duke, rode firſt; the reſt of the company followed: the Count Daun, with Lady Emma, whoſe burning eyes and fluſhed cheek, told that her converſation with the General had been far from pleaſant, cloſed the cavalcade; the Vicomteſſe and Sigiſmund keeping far to their ſide.

A heavy and rapid ſhower now began to fall: the Ladies loudly lamented; ſome for their habits, and others for their perſonal danger. The Duke propoſed, that each Gentleman ſhould cover a Lady with his dolmain. The General gave his to Lady Emma; and the reſt of the company readily followed the example. But the Vicomteſſe, reſolutely refuſed the cloak of Sigiſmund; ſaying, ſhe would borrow a great-coat from ſome of the ſervants. None of the men had one; yet ſhe ſtill perſiſted denying the Chevalier; declaring, that to expoſe him to cold would agonize her with the dread. He ſaw it would be in vain to contend;

tend; and reaching his cloak to a groom, it being too dark to diſcern objects, he whiſpered him to give it to her Ladyſhip, and ſay it was his own. The man did as he was deſired; and the Vicomteſſe believing him, had juſt wrapped it round her, when the complaining accents of Lady Louiſe, talking to one of the Ladies, caught the ear of Sigiſmund.

"I wiſh," ſaid ſhe, "you could divide that dolmain in two, and give me one half, for I am already wet through. Your ſhawl, which is beneath it, I beg you will lend me; for there is not one more cloak left in the company; and I am ſure I ſhall catch my death." —"I am ſorry for you, my dear!" anſwered the Lady, whipping her horſe, and paſſing her; "it rains faſt, and I muſt puſh on. Throw your pocket-handkerchief over your ſhoulders!"—"What! when even my thick habit is dripping?" aſked the poor Louiſe, half weeping. But ſhe received no anſwer, for her compaſſionate friend had rode forward. She now actually ſobbed with vexation.

The heart of the unhappy Sigiſmund melted at the diſconſolate plight of the ſhivering beauty: without uttering a word, he pulled off his own coat, regardleſs of his expoſed ſituation, went cloſe up to her, throwing it over her back in ſilence, he buttoned it round her neck; and without anſwering her reiterated queſtion of "To whom I am obliged?" He turned away.

Perfectly ſoaked by the rain, which ſoon penetrated through his waiſtcoat and linen, he rode on till they reached Koningſtein. The Caſtle gates were ready open to receive them. The Vicomte, the Counteſs, and other of the gueſts, who had remained at home, were all collected round the mulled wine and ſmoaking board. The Ladies haſtily diſmounted, and ran to their dreſſing-rooms. The Vicomteſſe alone lingered on the arm of de Solignac, looking among the horſes and crowd for her Theodore: but Theodore did not appear: with an anxious heart ſhe permitted her Lord to lead her into the hall; and then followed her women to her chamber.

Sigiſmund

Sigiſmund had flown to his own room; where, completely ſtripping, and redreſſing himſelf, chilled to the ſoul by the cold rain, and almoſt famiſhed for want of food, he ſupped upon a piece of his bread, and drinking a full goblet of Madeira, haſtened down ſtairs to enquire after his dear Vicomteſſe.

Her Ladyſhip, and the whole of the ſhivering groupe, were now aſſembled round the fire. As ſoon as the thoughtful eyes of the Vicomteſſe fell on the entering figure of her favourite, ſhe made room on the ſofa on which ſhe ſat for him to come near. He placed himſelf beſide her and aſked how ſhe felt herſelf? —"Perfectly well," ſaid ſhe, "did I not fear that your kind cheating has injured yourſelf. The collar on the cloak betrayed you. Ah! why? my dear boy, did you run ſuch a riſk?"—"I ſhould have ran a greater," anſwered he ſmiling, "had I expoſed you to the damp; and for once you ſee, my dear Vicomteſſe! your paragon can deceive as readily as the reſt of his ſex!"—"Ah! but ſuch affectionate deceptions," ſaid ſhe, ſtealing his hand to her lips, "how cloſely do they draw you to my heart!"

The Vicomte interrupted their converſation. He brought two large goblets of ſpiced wine, and gave one to his wife, and the other to Sigiſmund. "Here, my dears," ſaid he, "the Ducheſs ſends you theſe. Drink them; they will repulſe the cold which moſt probably you have caught!" As the Vicomteſſe haſtily put hers to her lips, and ſwallowed ſome, Sigiſmund held her wriſt, to prevent her drinking more; and in a voice of terror ſaid, "Which does the Ducheſs ſend to me?"—"That in your own hand," anſwered the Vicomte; the other I mixed myſelf for Alexina, while her Highneſs honoured you by brewing this; ſo do not be alarmed," continued he laughing; "you have got the nectared bowl!"—"I believe it," replied he; "I thank her as ſhe merits!" and taking the goblet in his hand, he coolly threw its contents into the cinders, which were collected under the grate.

"Theodore!" ejaculated de Solignac, "what does this mean?"—"Nothing," anſwered he; "I only took the readieſt way to get rid of my wine, that I might pledge my dear Vicomteſſe in hers."—"Thank you, my love!"

love!" replied ſhe, and immediately gave it to him. What ſhe had drank of, he would not repulſe. He therefore took a little. The gallantry of his whim, as ſhe conſidered it, pleaſed her highly; and for an hour or two, while the reſt of the company ſat at ſupper, converſation was ſupported between them, with ſomething reſembling their paſt vivacity. Sigiſmund forced his ſpirits; but he did it ſo well, that the affectionate heart of his ſecond mother forgot, in his now lively ſallies and enchanting ſmiles, his former vague anſwers and her own recent tears.

During this time Sigiſmund frequently looked about, watching the entrance of the Rhinelander; but he did not appear; terrified leſt Madame Stahl ſhould have been taken ill, or that he could not perſuade her to fly, he rejoiced when the aſſembly adjourned for the night. After the Vicomteſſe had left the room, Sigiſmund ſtill lingered; and catching Daun's arm, as he was alſo turning out of the door, he aſked him if he had ſeen any thing of Hirchfeld? His Lordſhip replied in the negative; and propoſed calling for one of his grooms. The valet only attended. He ſaid, that

that his maſter had given him a letter to deliver to the Chevalier the firſt ſecret moment he could catch. Sigiſmund told him to give it to him now, for the preſence of the General was the ſame as his own. The ſervant withdrew; and the two friends going near to a chandelier, read the following note from Hirchfeld:

" Dear de Cevennes!

" I have carried off Madame Stahl in ſafety. When you read this I ſhall be far on the road to the houſe of my ſiſter at Weimar.—Poor Lady! your letter threw her into ſuch a paroxiſm of dread that ſhe fell from one fit into another, and raved to be taken immediately from the caſtle. Unable to withſtand the prayers of ſo beautiful and perſecuted a woman: and as my horſes were at my own command, I caught her up in one of her ſwoons, and placed her in my carriage. After thus partly obeying and partly exceeding your orders, I muſt beg your pardon for being ſo precipitate; and my Lord the Count Daun's for robbing him of the happineſs of protecting one of the moſt amiable Ladies in the world!

" A hun-

"A hundred miles is no bad galloping: ſo you cannot expect to ſee me for ſome days. When we meet I hope to give you an agreeable account of my charge; and to find yourſelf prepared to run the raſcal Blackenberg through the body! Adieu!

"Your faithful friend,

"JOHANN FRIEDRICH Count Hirchfeld."

"Well," ſaid Sigiſmund, as he cloſed the letter and drawing a deep ſigh as if he had heaved a mighty load from his breaſt; "I am thankful that ſhe is gone!"—"And ſo am I for your ſake. I only hope that this gallant hero will be prudent, and preſerve her aſylum ſecret!"—"I could reſt my life in his keeping," cried Sigiſmund; "his energy of ſpeaking is the warmth of a glowing heart, not the fumes of a fiery imagination."—"Well, well! I am ſatisfied," anſwered the Count. "Many of my countrymen are too rhodomontade. It has become a national characteriſtic: and I muſt confeſs I was afraid that he might be ſuch a headlong being. It is not common for ſuch men to be ſteady: but if Hirchfeld is indeed an exception, I will not be his enemy?"

"His

"His enemy! my lord?" aſked Sigiſmund amazed. "Not exactly that," anſwered the Count ſmiling; "but hitherto I have not been his friend. However, I will no longer oppoſe him; but let nature and his honour take their courſe." Sigiſmund underſtood him, and ſmiled alſo. "May my worthy friend be happy!" added he, "His heart has ſuffered——"—"And he will be moſt richly recompenſed," interrupted the General, "if he is honoured by the hand of Lady Emma! She is in my eyes the moſt amiable of women: and could I have directed her affections they ſhould have made another choice." Sigiſmund ſighed. "Ah!" thought he, "what muſt this fatal paſſion be that makes ſuch havoc even in the braveſt boſoms! Can the revered Count be the ſecret lover of Lady Emma?" He anſwered himſelf in the affirmative, and ſighed again.

Daun miſtook the deep expreſſion of his countenance, and the motive of theſe ſighs: he looked at him with pity; and laying his hand gently on his arm, ſaid, "And is it ſo?" —"What?" aſked Sigiſmund, ſurpriſed.— "Alas! my dear young friend, I fear you love

love the amiable Lady Emma: do not deny it," continued he, ſeeing he was going to ſpeak; "I have read it in thoſe heavings. Believe me, Chevalier, you were the man whom I would have choſen for her; I mean not to ſay, that on ſo ſhort an acquaintance I could found my eſteem entirely on your own merits: no; a friend of mine, who is long ſince dead, you ſo ſtrongly reſemble"—a cold dew crept over the body of Sigiſmund—"that from the firſt moment I beheld you, I felt that I muſt more than like you. The Count Koningſtein, who was once Lord of this Caſtle, was the man I mention: I make no doubt but that you have heard of him: he was a good ſoldier, and the moſt faithful friend this heart ever knew."

He preſſed his hand on his breaſt; and looking up to Heaven did not obſerve the changing features of his auditor. "Yes, continued he, "Koningſtein was all that is noble: and under almoſt the ſame form, when I firſt ſaw you, I regarded you as if I had been aſſured you poſſeſſed equally as illuſtrious a ſpirit." Daun pauſed, and looked on Sigiſmund: he beheld him pale, agitated, bluſhing: he fixed his

his eyes on him as if he would pierce him through. Unable to bear their ſcrutinizing gaze, becauſe fettered in his confidence by Madame Stahl, and trembling with tranſport at hearing ſuch eulogies on his father, he made no anſwer; but impetuouſly catching the hand of the amazed General to his lips, dropped it and ruſhed out of the room.

When arrived in his own chamber he threw himſelf on his bed, and gave way to the firſt tears of rapture which he had for ſome time ſhed: he wept, he knelt, he thanked God, and beſeeched Heaven that he might never act ſo as to prove himſelf unworthy of being the ſon of ſuch a parent. On his pillow he ruminated on the ſtory of Madame Stahl: on her honourable and immutable attachment to his father: and on what might be her motives for concealing her name: and for why ſhe wiſhed to hide herſelf from Deux-ponts; for, by ſome unaccountable aſſociation, he imagined that it muſt be his Highneſs whom ſhe dreaded. He was comforted by the conſciouſneſs that ſhe was ſafe: and fell aſleep with the reſolve not to diſcover himſelf to any perſon until Hirch-

feld's

feld's return, when he hoped to receive her permiſſion.

While he yet ſlept, his enemies were awake planning his deſtruction. In the middle of the night Lady Louiſe taking ſuddenly ill, in conſequence of the damp in her ride, the houſekeeper was called to bring ſome family-medicines which were placed under her care. No houſekeeper could be found: even Jagellon, her own woman, was miſſing alſo. The alarm ſpread through the ſervants, and ſoon reached the apartment of Blackenberg.—— Startled at the intelligence of her having eloped, he aſked for the Chevalier. The chamberlain told him that in coming along the gallery, by the deſire of Lady Louiſe he had looked into his chamber; and he ſaw the young gentleman ſo profoundly aſleep, that the noiſe which he made in throwing open the door did not awake him.

The Count jumped out of bed: and after having accompanied his ſervants round every part of the Caſtle, he ordered the grooms to be called. One of the lads told his Lordſhip that in croſſing the heath beyond the north

wood, about ſun-ſet the preceding evening, he ſaw Count Hirchfeld, Madame Stahl, and Jagellon, go off together in a chariot-and-four. This was enough for Blackenberg: he recollected not having ſeen the Rhinelander after his return from the villa; and therefore he was ſatisfied.

He diſmiſſed the ſervants to their beds, ordering one to ſit up with Lady Louiſe's woman: he then turned down the gallery; but inſtead of going to his own room, he went immediately to the chamber of the Ducheſs. Their converſation was long. Had the ſenate of hell been aſſembled, more wickedneſs could not have been projected, more wickedneſs could not have been approved. The flight of Madame Stahl ſeemed to declare open war: and they determined that after to-morrow, another ſun ſhould not riſe on the exiſtence of the Chevalier. After this bloody confederacy, they parted: not to ſleep; but to be gnawed by the fangs of malignity and ſin.

Unconſcious of the black treaſon which hung over him, Sigiſmund appeared in the billiard-

billiard-room next morning with a cheerfulneſs of feature that he did not uſually wear. To know that he was eſteemed by the boſom friend of his dear father, transfuſed ſuch a balm through his breaſt, that the Vicomteſſe looked at him with delight, as ſhe beheld his intelligent blue eyes again ſwimming in the mild luſtre of ſerenity.

The Duke and Count Daun, with the gentle Lady Emma, ſoon joined the circle. The noon wore away in a converſation, in which ſenſibility and wit contended: dinner paſſed off with equal hilarity: the blandiſhments of the Ducheſs mixed with the general gaiety; and even the recent frown of Blackenberg gave way to his uſual *flickering ſmile*.

In proportion as the vivacity of the company degenerated into mere mirth, the loud voice and boiſterous laugh preſſed upon the ear of Sigiſmund, fatigued his ſpirits, and depreſſed his heart. Retroſpection once more clouded his eye. Unwilling to diſpel the dimples from the happy face of his dear Vicomteſſe, he whiſpered to her, that he was going to ſaunter a little in the park, and would re-

turn before the coffee had left the table. She nodded her aſſent, and he quitted the room without farther interruption.

Twilight hung heavily on the trees; and, obſcuring the diſtant tops of the Bohemian mountains, blended them with the thickening miſt. Sigiſmund felt the drearineſs of the proſpect give additional diſcomfort to his mind. Strolling on, forgetful of the dew which clung to his cloaths, he wondered at the late Lethean ſerenity of his ſoul; at the deluſive exhilaration that ſucceeded it. He looked back on the few laſt hours with a wild kind of aſtoniſhment. He had really ſmiled, he had laughed, he was happy!—He had done all this; and for why? What authorized ſuch a change? O! nothing which had paſſed! The memory of his brother was yet obſcured; the name of his father was yet buried in his tomb: he yet permitted the deſtroyer of his houſe to revel in his crime, to triumph, to plot his ruin, to murder the only remaining aſſertor of the family of Koningſtein! His ſoul ſhuddered. How could he ſmile in the preſence of the villain? Surely he had been ſpell-bound; or his heart had forgotten its feeling! But the deluſion

deluſion was vaniſhed; and, left cold, forlorn, diſſatisfied with himſelf, he thought he had ſacrileged the memory of the dead; and, with a ſickening boſom and warring ſpirits, he wandered on, regardleſs whither he went.

The moon ſtruggled with the rolling clouds to afford ſome light to the darkened earth. A few of her watry beams fell acroſs the chapel and ſepulchre. His heart was weary of reflection, and he leaned his aching head againſt one of its columns. A ſudden ruſtling amid the underwood behind, made him turn round; and in the next moment the point of a ſmall-ſword paſſed between his waiſtcoat and his ſide. The cold ſteel left the ſenſation undetermined whether he was wounded or not; but this heſitation prevented not his drawing and making a paſs at the aſſaſſin.

A deſperate battle now enſued. Sigiſmund, unnerved by his melancholy, fought with more ſkill than ſtrength; but his opponent poſſeſſing both one and the other, bore on him with fury. The panting Chevalier now merely ſtood on the defenſive, parrying his thruſts, which came faſter and more illuſive, till the fatigued arm of Sigiſmund could hardly ſup-

port his weapon, which had now come to a dangerous and deciſive lock. Blackenberg, for it was he, obſerving his advantage and the ſinking form of his victim, with a ſavage exertion of his arm knocked down the ſword of Sigiſmund, and the next moment he would have ſheathed his weapon in his body; but his limbs ſhrunk under him, and firſt reeling and then running, he fled from the ſpot.

The exhauſted Sigiſmund fell againſt the pillar, and preſſing down his beating heart with one hand, he puſhed off his hat with the other, to receive benefit from the freer admiſſion of the air.

A female figure, on which the light fell clear, but faintly, ſtood at his ſide. Her form was wrapped in a grey mantle, which blended with the colour of the night; and only by her pallid face and paler hands, which ſhe ſtretched out to him, as ſhe dropped on her knees, could he have ſeen that ſhe was preſent. He gazed at her in ſilence. Then ſuddenly ſinking down by her ſide, he caſt his arms around her, and in a broken, murmuring voice, ejaculated, "Roſamund!"

The

The lady would have ſhrunk from his embrace, but her weakened frame only ſlid to lean more upon his arm: and in low and faltering accents ſhe exclaimed, "Save me! Save me!"—"Yes," cried Sigiſmund, ſtraining her to his heart, "Dear, ſuffering angel, to the laſt drop of my blood I will defend you!"—"Then take me away? Hide me, or Blackenberg will know that I yet exiſt?" She attempted to riſe, but again dropt upon the ground. Sigiſmund raiſed her up, and leading her trembling limbs to the ſteps of the chapel, placed her upon them.

She now ſat ſilent, reſting her feeble head upon his ſhoulder. She breathed heavily, and her tears poured in torrents from her eyes. He took her cold and aſhy hand in his: and in the energetic voice of a full and labouring heart, he exclaimed, "Roſamund! moſt compaſſionate, amiable Roſamund! rely on my everlaſting protection. In me, deareſt of beings! you behold the only ſurviving ſon of that family you deplore!" The lady eſſayed to ſpeak, but ſhe could not. "I will take you," continued he, "to a woman as excellent as yourſelf; and who has foſtered, without

without knowing him, the perſecuted ſon of Koningſtein."

A loud ſhriek from the lady ſtopped his utterance, and ſhe dropped ſenſeleſs back upon the marble. Terrified at the conſequence of his abrupt diſcloſure, he attempted to recover her but in vain. He called loudly for aſſiſtance, but no aſſiſtance preſented itſelf; while with a frantic and tortured heart, he caught her up in his arms and ran with her to the Caſtle.

No perſon happened to be in the hall.—Swiftly paſſing through it, he lightly mounted the ſtairs, puſhed open the door of his apartment, and laid his lifeleſs burthen on the bed. By the glimmering of the moon, which ſhone through the ſhutters of the window, he found ſome water, which he threw on her face; and then ſeeking the wine, poured a little into her mouth. With difficulty ſhe began to breathe, but could not yet articulate. He conjured her, as he ſupported her head on his boſom, to ſwallow the remaining Madeira. She did ſo. And the next inſtant, raiſing her two feeble hands in an imploring attitude,

attitude, ſhe ſaid in a deep and beſeeching tone, " For the ſake of mercy, tell me, who is this ſon of Koningſtein? What is he? Where is he?—" Deareſt Roſamund!" cried he, " you are reſting on the breaſt of that ſon. I am that Sigiſmund, whom the blackeſt of all villains threw into the Elbe."—" Bleſſed God!" cried the Lady, ſtarting up and flinging herſelf impetuouſly on his neck, " you are my child!"

A palſied ſenſation ſeized on the frame of Sigiſmund. He dropped his ſwooning head upon her ſhoulder. " Sigiſmund! my ſon!" cried ſhe in a voice of terror, " look up, and behold your poor ſuffering, repentant mother!"—" My mother faltered he, and raiſing his head; it fell again; and a dying thrill crept through his veins. " Yes, indeed, your mother!" exclaimed ſhe, " the miſerable Chriſtina! O! my beloved ſon! do not turn from me! do not hate me!" She laid her face to his. And flinging his arms round her neck, he lay ſilent, and ſtruggling as if between life and death.

At laſt a plentiful ſhower of tears relieved his burſting heart; and for many minutes he wept unceaſing on the boſom of his only parent.

When he had ſufficiently recovered his bewildered ſenſes, he roſe from the bed, and entreated the agitated Princeſs, whoſe ſobs now almoſt roſe to convulſions, to compoſe herſelf. She laid her head upon the pillow, and tried, by repreſſing her breath, to ſtay thoſe writhings of her ſoul, which ſeemed to threaten itſelf with inſtant annihilation. Sigiſmund, hardly able to ſupport himſelf, flew to the gallery, and brought thence a lamp. He ſet it on the table, and bolted the door to prevent all intruſion.

He threw himſelf on his knees beſide the bed, and taking one of his mother's hands, drew it to his lips. She looked up. Her eyes ſeemed riveted with a ſtaggering diſtraction on his face. Caſting her arms ſuddenly up, ſhe fell upon his neck, and in accents of agony, cried, "Dear image of thy brother! O! that face harrows me with miſery! God! God! forgive me?" exclaimed ſhe, again gazing on him;

him; "the treatment I gave that angel feſters in my ſoul.—Yes, Sigiſmund," added ſhe, calming her voice, "the memory of my treatment to the injured Xavier has been worſe to me than all the cruelties which I have ſuffered! —Tell me! tell me! that you forgive me, and I ſhall be at peace! I ſhall believe that it is he who ſpeaks—Ah no!" cried ſhe, interrupting herſelf with a deep groan of compunction; "I cannot deceive myſelf! Thoſe lips are cloſed for ever. I ſhall never hear him breathe my pardon. O no! they will never open till he comes to arraign me before God!"

"My dear mother!" cried Sigiſmund, catching her two hands in his, and running over her emaciated countenance with the deepeſt anguiſh in his eyes and voice, "ſpeak not ſo, without you would kill your only ſon; a ſon who loves you as his only hold to earth! Live, my mother; live, and be comforted for my ſake! and the angelic ſpirits of my father and my brother will bleſs you for conſoling me!" The tears of Sigiſmund flowed over the wriſts of Chriſtina. She kiſſed them off with eagerneſs.

"More

"More precious are theſe forgiving drops to me," cried ſhe, "than the exiſtence which they revive! Yes, my ſon, you ſhall lead me to that heaven where my heart is. Your meek ſpirit ſhall teach to my repentance, reſignation." Sigiſmund again flung his arms round the neck of his mother, and their tears flowed and mingled together.

CHAP. VI.

"Alas! alas! that I ſhould *ſee* thee ſo!
"What ravages have time and ſorrow made
"In heav'n's moſt perfect work, the faireſt temple
"Nature e'er rear'd in majeſty and grace!"

CUMBERLAND.

AMONGST unnumbered ſighs and ſelf-accuſations, Sigiſmund learnt from his mother, that for the lingering ſpace of fourteen years ſhe had been confined beneath the chambers of the mauſoleum. Upon the conviction which ſhe had evinced to Blackenberg of his having murdered both her children, and her never-ceaſing outcries that ſhe would proclaim it to the Empreſs; unable by any arts to calm her arouſed affection and repentance, he threatened her with death if ſhe perſiſted.

She

She did perſiſt. And he ordered Freidrach, who had long been the creature of his pleaſures, to purchaſe ſome of the ſwifteſt poiſon which Dreſden could produce. The beauty and anguiſh of the Princeſs intereſted the heart of the man; and, purſuing a hint which he recollected to have read in an old Italian book, intitled *Girolamo de la Corte's Hiſtory of Verona*, inſtead of the drug intended, he brought a ſtrong opiate; and giving that to his Lord, it was adminiſtered to the unhappy Chriſtina. She had been violently agitated previous to her taking it by a vehement diſpute with her huſband, wherein ſhe reproached him with being the aſſaſſin of her ſons. His cruel calmneſs during this converſation increaſed her agonies, and ended in the moſt torturing convulſions.

During theſe fits, the ſuppoſed poiſon was poured down her throat; and ſhe gradually ſunk off, to all appearance, from ſtupor to death. By the inſtigation of Freidrach, who told his Lord a diſcovery might be made, ſhould any one by accident narrowly examine the body, her Highneſs was interred the next morning, with great magnificence, in the fa-

mily ſepulchre of Koningſtein. The care of Freidrach had contrived to give air into the coffin: and as ſoon as the mourners were diſperſed, and Blackenberg retired to his cloſet, he with wine and other refreſhments, returned to the vault.

He opened the coffin. The Princeſs was not yet waked. Touching her hands and cheek, which were cold, he almoſt feared that by ſome miſtake he had too well executed the Count's commands. With trembling nerves, he poured ſome wine into her mouth, which ſhe ſwallowed, and the next moment, with heavy moans, opened her eyes. The joy of the poor fellow was extreme, till her terrors brought him to recollection. He then related to her the whole proceeding; and ended with ſaying, he had provided for her a room beneath the arch of the mauſoleum.

The cries of Chriſtina now re-echoed through the building: ſpringing haſtily from the ſad bed of death, ſhe fell on her knees before him, and entreated to be taken to her brother, the Duke of Saxe Altemberg. But here, Freidrach was reſolute. He could not conſent.

conſent. He had ſworn to his Lord that ſhe ſhould never trouble him again: and though the oath was equivocal, he declared he would not draw on him the curſe of Heaven by a confirmed perjury. In vain the Princeſs urged, that to keep ſuch a vow was adding ſin to ſin. Still Freidrach was ſtern, and lifting her up in his arms, amidſt her ſtruggles and piercing ſhrieks, carried her down a ſloping door, which led them into the vaults beneath.

In one of them, a lamp was already burning: and a carpet which covered the whole apartment, a tent-bed, a chair, a table, and a charcoal ſtove, compoſed the whole of the furniture. "This is your room, honoured Lady!" ſaid Freidrach as he laid his almoſt ſwooning charge upon the mattraſs; "I have collected theſe things together to make it a more comfortable home, though at the beſt it is but deſolate. Here is oil, and here is firing, and proviſions for your Highneſs!" The Princeſs made no reply, but renewed cries, and beating her poor diſtracted head againſt the pillars of her bed.

Day after day rolled on. In the courſe of time, ſhe acquired ſome compoſure: and Freidrach

drach bringing refreſhments twice in the week ſufficient to ſuſtain her until his next viſit.—Thus ſhe lived for fourteen years, a life of the moſt excruciating remorſe for the horrors which ſhe had brought on her children—on herſelf. She ſhuddered at her criminal weakneſs, in hearkening to the proffered paſſion of the man whom her firſt Lord had foſtered.—That ſhe was impriſoned ſo near the laſt remains of that inſulted huſband and his murdered ſon, was not the leaſt of her horrors.—Thus ſhe exiſted, till her long ſorrow reduced her to a bed of ſickneſs.

Her attendant paid as much attention to her as his other cares would admit; but owing to the buſtle of the Caſtle previous to the fête, he was more remiſs in his ſervices, and juſt as ſhe was quite recovered ceaſed to come at all. Her proviſions were exhauſted; and to ſtarve! irkſome as life was to her, the idea electrified her with terror. During another night and day, ſhe ſuffered the double tortures of extreme hunger and agonizing dread. The anguiſh of her mind and body gave her artificial ſtrength: as evening deepened in, ſhe caught up her lamp, and with a frantic ſtep traverſed

traverſed the different apartments of her dreary abode. The principal door which led into the upper vaults was faſtened, and denied her all hope: but the ſight of a ſquare aperture in one of the farther chambers, near the top of the arch, for the purpoſe of giving air to the ſepulchre, filled her with delight. Her table and her chair, placed one above the other, enabled her to reach it, while with a bounding heart, and ſome difficulty, ſhe thruſt herſelf through.

She found herſelf once more under the broad canopy of Heaven: ruſhing forward to fly ſhe knew not whither, ſhe heard the claſhing of ſwords; the next moment ſhe was in the preſence of the combatants. When the one fled, ſhe knelt to the other for protection; and that other was her ſon.

As the Princeſs ended her narrative the heart of Sigiſmund was rived with this increaſe of villainy in the man whom he had ſo long ſuffered to exiſt. Once more embracing his altered mother, he entreated her to lie down on the bed and to compoſe herſelf, whilſt he related to her the goodneſs of that

Providence which had preſerved his life, to be her defender and ſupport. Chriſtina liſtened with gratitude and tranſport: ſhe promiſed to remain quiet as he withdrew to acquaint the Vicomteſſe that he had yet a parent.

The night now was far advanced; but fortunately for Sigiſmund, Lady de Solignac was ſtill up, when he opened her dreſſing-room door. Her Ladyſhip, ſurpriſed at this unuſual viſit, alſo at the animated expreſſion of his fine features, deſired her maids to withdraw. As they obeyed her commands, he flung himſelf at her feet, and tried in vain to ſpeak. He could only kiſs her hand over and over, and preſs it in a tumult to his forehead. "Theodore! my dear love!" cried ſhe, bending down and raiſing him from the ground; "what mean theſe ecſtacies?" He flung himſelf unto her boſom, and exclaimed in a burſt of tears, "I have found my mother!"

The Vicomteſſe, thunderſtruck, dropped her head on his ſhoulder. Her heart ſeemed to have received a blow, and ſhe lay ſtupified and almoſt inſenſible to the power of thought.

"Yes,"

"Yes," cried he, ſtraining her to his breaſt; "my poor mother will thank you for your goodneſs to her ſon!"—"O, Theodore! Theodore!" cried ſhe, ſtriving to repreſs the riſing ſobs, "am I to forget that you are my child? God gave you to me! Talk not of my goodneſs, or you will kill me!"—Sigiſmund knew not what to ſay: his heart was full of affection for her; but to expreſs what he felt, his tongue could not form one ſentence.

After a painful pauſe of many minutes, the Vicomteſſe, though yet with her handkerchief covering her face, ſpoke in a conquered voice: "Forgive me this deſpicable weakneſs?—My tenderneſs for you, Theodore!" ſhe ſtopped for a moment, then reſumed: "Tell me, who is this happy mother? Where did you find her?"—"You muſt compoſe yourſelf firſt," ſaid Sigiſmund; "tranquillize your ſpirits, my beloved mother! for ſtill my own parent muſt divide that title with you, who ſaved my life and enſured my happineſs, by giving me the education of a gentleman."—"Deareſt, adored, boy!" cried her Ladyſhip, riſing from her ſeat; "I will be ſerene! I will liſten to the relation

relation of that which has made you ſo happy."

She retired to her cloſet for a few minutes; then returned with a ſweet ſmile upon her lips, though her eyes were yet red with weeping. She ſeated herſelf beſide her darling; he looked at her for ſome time in ſilence. She obſerved with a trembling anxiety the labouring of his boſom, which ſhone in his agitated eye. At laſt, he once more caught the two hands of her Ladyſhip faſt in his, and in a haſty articulation ſaid, "You will be ſurpriſed, I fear ſhocked; for I am going to unravel the myſtery of my recent conduct!" The expectation of the Vicomteſſe roſe to almoſt ſickneſs; the blood fled from her lips.—"Nay, do not alarm yourſelf!" cried he, ſeeing her perturbation; "but, I cannot heſitate; I am the heir of this Caſtle, the ſon of Count Koningſtein; and Blackenberg was the man who would have murdered me!"—He ſtopped to recover his exhauſted breath. "Proceed," cried ſhe, her face paler than before.

"I have this night found my mother," continued he, in a more tempered tone; "ſhe has been

been for theſe fourteen years back locked within the tomb of my father, and ſupported by the humanity of the man whom Blackenberg had commanded to deſtroy her. This Caſtle is my home," continued he; "the ſuſpicion, and afterwards the conviction that it was ſo, influenced the ſtrangeneſs of my behaviour. I knew it by ten thouſand proofs; but my fear of wounding the feelings of my dear Vicomte by criminating his relation; and after that, other reaſons prevented me from repoſing my hiſtory in you.—But now, all muſt be waved. I have a mother; her honour ſhall be cleared, and her injuries revenged."—"Right," cried her Ladyſhip, recovering from her conſternation; "but let us not decide till to-morrow! —My love," ſaid ſhe, as the tears rained down her cheeks; "your information has bewildered me. It has confounded all here." He ſnatched the hand which ſhe laid upon her breaſt; "Ah, why?" ejaculated he; you cannot be ſorry that I find my mother innocent of the black crime of her huſband? All will now be as it was. You ſhall again ſee the face of your loved Theodore dreſſed in everlaſting ſmiles." She kiſſed his forehead. "Then

lead

lead me to your mother; and let me tell her I muſt ſhare your heart!"

As they entered the chamber of Sigiſmund, the Princeſs, at the ſight of her ſon and his companion, attempted to riſe from the bed; but her Ladyſhip haſtily flying forward, conjured her to remain as ſhe was. Her Highneſs bowed her thanks; and taking the ſnowy hand of the Vicomteſſe in her withered fingers, the contraſt, and her other thouſand emotions, bore hard upon her heart: falling back upon the out-ſtretched arm of her Ladyſhip, ſhe burſt into tears. The ſoul of Lady de Solignac had perfectly collected itſelf; and caſting her eyes on the ſon of Chriſtina as he knelt by the ſide of his mother and hid his face in her robe, her inmoſt ſpirit yearned to give peace to a heart ſo precious, ſo tender.

"O Vicomteſſe!" cried the Princeſs in a voice of agony, "ſee the ravages of guilt and miſery!—What? what am I now?" cried ſhe with increaſed diſtraction; and haſtily flinging herſelf round, buried her head in the pillow. "My mother! my ineſtimable mother!" exclaimed Sigiſmund, riſing and throwing

ing himſelf on her boſom. Lady de Solignac wrung her hands; but choaking the riſing grief which menaced the fortitude ſhe ought to exert, ſhe darted out of the room; and entering her own, diſpatched her maids to their own beds, telling her confidential woman to remain where ſhe was.

She then returned to Sigiſmund's apartment; and flinging her arms round the weeping mother and ſon, ſaid in a voice of mournful energy; "Dear Theodore, have mercy on your mother's health! This contention of her feelings is too much for her life!" Sigiſmund roſe ſilently; and covering his face with his handkerchief, walked towards the window. The Vicomteſſe now expoſtulated, ſoothed, perſuaded the Princeſs; and at laſt gained her conſent to leave her ſon's chamber, and to lie concealed in her Ladyſhip's apartment till they had conſulted the Vicomte how they ſhould proceed. Sigiſmund, hearing the reſult of his patroneſs's tender remonſtrances, turned from the caſement againſt which he leaned; and ſilently giving his arm to his mother, aſſiſted the Vicomteſſe to lead her to her own room.

While

While the fatigued Princeſs had ſunk down upon a chair, and reſted her dizzy head upon the boſom of her ſon, Lady de Solignac made her woman promiſe ſecrecy; and in a few words told her that the Lady preſent was her friend; that while ſhe remained under her care, all the other maids were to be kept out of her Ladyſhip's bed-room, which ſhe gave up to the Lady, and ſhe herſelf would ſhare hers. The woman, though almoſt petrified with aſtoniſhment, aſſiſted the Chevalier to lead the Princeſs into her bed-chamber; where, throwing herſelf on his neck, ſhe bade him farewel for the night.

Overcome by all that was in his heart, he hurried from the apartment into the dreſſing-room: the Vicomteſſe was yet ſtanding; he caſt himſelf at her feet; and, in mute gratitude, ſtretched out his arms towards her: ſhe would have flung herſelf into them; but haſtily turning away, leſt her tenderneſs might the more derange the little ſelf-poſſeſſion of her adopted ſon, he caught the hem of her train as ſhe ſwept through the oppoſite door, and eagerly preſſed it to his lips.

When

When he cloſed himſelf within his own chamber, he could hardly believe that he was awake: that he found a mother ſo kind, ſo affectionate, ſeemed to him a mere effect of the imagination. He could not reſt a moment on his ſeat: he roſe, he walked about, he half-undreſſed himſelf, then redreſſed himſelf, and acted a thouſand inconſiſtencies, ſo great was the tumult of his mind. Joy was in his boſom; but it was an uneaſy joy.

He flung open the window: he leaned out; but he could ſee nothing, for the night was all one black maſs; and his waiſtcoat being unfaſtened, the cold north wind pierced him through. He ſhut the caſement; and, cloathed as he was, wrapped himſelf in the coverlid; and flinging himſelf on the bed, lay reſtleſs and anxious, counting the hours as they lingeringly ſtruck, till the dawn firſt began to appear.

Too impatient to wait another minute, he roſe: a little adjuſting his apparel, he ſtole out of the room, and tapped at the dreſſing-room door of the Vicomteſſe: all was ſilent: he opened it: no one was there: he ventured

ſoftly to croſs it; and gently turning the lock of his mother's chamber, he ſtepped in; and drawing aſide the curtains of her bed, beheld her in a refreſhing ſlumber. This was ſufficient to calm his ſolicitude: ſtealing quietly back again, he regained his own apartment, without diſturbing any body: he ſat down by the ſide of his bed; and taking a book to amuſe him until his friends aroſe, the ſubſiding of his mind, added to the chillneſs of the morning air, increaſed the heavineſs of a want of reſt; and, unconſciouſly to himſelf, the volume ſlid from his hands, and he fell back in a profound ſleep.

He ſlept till he was awakened by the touch of the ſoft cheek of the Vicomteſſe, lying cloſe to his: he opened his eyes. "How are you, my love?" ſaid ſhe: "I have told your hiſtory to my dear Lord, and to your two friends; and here they are to proffer you their ſervices." Sigiſmund, confuſed at his long ſlumber, ſtarted up, and was received into the affectionate arms of the Vicomte, who preſented him to the Duke of Deux-ponts and Count Daun. They ſhook him cordially by the hand. Daun, with a glittering humidity

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in his eye, ſaid, "A ſon of Koningſtein muſt be dear to me!" Sigiſmund could not reply, but by his looks.

"Yes, my Lord Duke!" continued the General, turning his head to Deux-ponts; "you know how often I have obſerved to your Highneſs the great likeneſs of this young man to our brave and lamented brother ſoldier."—"I recollect it perfectly," anſwered the Duke; "and I make no doubt, had I paid as much attention to the features of his noble father as I did to thoſe of his lovely miſtreſs, I ſhould have been alſo ſenſible of the reſemblance."—"Whom does your Highneſs mean by his miſtreſs?" inquired the Vicomteſſe.—"The gentle Roſamund, your beautiful niece," anſwered the Duke: "and my dear young Count," cried he, addreſſing Sigiſmund, who was pouring out his grateful and eloquent ſoul to the Vicomte and Daun; "when we aſſert your rights, the wrongs of this ſweet girl muſt not be forgotten."—"Never!" exclaimed Sigiſmund with fervour; "I will take her from that gloomy monaſtery in which Blackenberg has ſo cruelly confined her! I will ſacrifice my life—Do not diſtreſs

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yourſelf, my beloved Vicomteſſe!" continued he, interrupting himſelf, and obſerving her Ladyſhip turn away in tears; "the angelic daughter of your Wilhelmina ſhall be as a ſiſter to me: I will protect her; and, to the end of my exiſtence, I will try to recal thoſe ſenſes which ſhe has loſt for me and mine." "Thank you, my love!" anſwered ſhe; but her tears ſtill flowing, ſhe ſtole out of the room.

The Duke, Count Daun, and the Vicomte, proceeded to conſult each other which would be the beſt manner to carry the affair before the empire. Daun ſaid, that in compliance with the wary uſages of juſtice, ſome documents, and other witneſſes beſides themſelves, muſt be produced. "The Princeſs muſt appear as ſoon as ſhe is ſufficiently recovered; and alſo that Madame Stahl, who ſeemed ſo intimately converſant in the moſt ſecret concerns of the family." The Duke propoſed, that ſhe muſt inſtantly be brought to the Caſtle. And as he feared to truſt any ſervant, however faithful, with a buſineſs of ſuch conſequence, he offered to bring her himſelf. He ſaid, after he had paid his reſpects to the Princeſs, he would order his equipage and quit

Koningſtein

Koningſtein as if for his own home. He would relate the tranſactions to Madame Stahl, and return with her immediately. Therefore, he adviſed, that her Highneſs ſhould remain quietly and ſecretly in the Vicomteſſe's apartments until he appeared with his charge; ſhe would then be quite recovered, and able, when ſupported by Madame Stahl, to aſſert her own rights, and to comfront the villain.

At the mention of Madame Stahl, the blood ruſhed over the face of Sigiſmund; "Pardon me, my Lord Duke!" ſaid he, addreſſing his Highneſs, "but I fear from ſome cauſe, hidden to me, that Madame Stahl is repugnant to meet you. It was upon your account that ſhe has concealed from me her real name: and therefore, as I cannot be too careful of the feelings of my earlieſt friend, I muſt ſolicit Count Daun to execute for me the kind office which your Highneſs meditated? Though my gratitude to you for the honour which you intended me, muſt ever live in my heart." "I will go for her with pleaſure," anſwered the General. "This is ſtrange indeed!" obſerved the Duke ſmiling, "I have not the ſmalleſt recollection of any lady who need

be alarmed at the mention of my name. However, Count," ſaid he, turning to Daun, " tell Madame Stahl, that whoever ſhe is, or under whatever title I have known her, as the eſteemed friend of the young Koningſtein, I ſhall receive her friendſhip, and her pardon for my terrific qualities, as a higher honor than the golden fleece!"—" I will deliver your meſſage to the very letter," replied the Count; and turning to the Vicomte and Sigiſmund, they yet held a more minute converſation on the ſubject of Blackenberg's crimes; till the Vicomteſſe entered to appriſe their Lordſhips that the Princeſs was ready to receive them.

Sigiſmund darted into the room a few minutes before the reſt. The change of her attire, with the invigorating powers of a night's ſleep had wrought a moſt agreeable alteration on the aſpect of his mother. As he flew forward, ſhe ſmiled, and holding out her hand to him, he caught it to his lips; and preſſing him to her heart, ſhe exclaimed, " O! that I had ever placed my felicity in maternal feelings!" At that moment Lady de Solignac entered. She preſented her

Lord

Lord to the Princeſs, who gave him one hand and the Duke another. But when her eyes fell on the veteran features of the General, ſhe burſt into tears; and taking both her hands from thoſe to whom ſhe had given them, ſhe held them towards Daun, and in a ſtifled voice, ſaid, "Here, my Lord! receive the never dying eſteem of the faithleſs widow of your friend! But now, O! now, I am a repentant mother!" The Count dropt on his knee, and reſpectfully kiſſed the hands ſhe extended to him.

A ſilence for many minutes enſued. "Ah!" thought Sigiſmund, "how much this happineſs feels like ſorrow!" He bent his head from a ſcence that ſo oppreſſed him. "My heart has been ſeared by affliction," ſaid he to himſelf, "and all its perceptions partakes of the foreneſs of the wound." He ſighed deeply; and leaning over the back of his mother's ſofa, reprobated the ingratitude of his nature, which ſeemed to repel every ſource of enjoyment, and to hang like a glutton upon ſighs and tears.

The pauſe did not now continue; for the benevolent Duke, ſeeing the painful embarraſſment of the party, had begun a converſation upon ſome lighter matter. And when the Princeſs urged the buſineſs of her ſon's rights, his Highneſs and the Vicomte conjured her to wave the ſubject, for all that depended on the exertion of man ſhould be accompliſhed by themſelves, for the reſtitution of the young Count. As for Daun, he converſed with nods and bows only; for the ſhock which he had received on ſeeing the ſad revolution in the once beautiful form of Chriſtina, hung like a load at his breaſt.

This poor little faded being was once the glory and envy of the German Court: her lovelineſs paſſed into a proverb, and the Electors of the Empire had knelt at her feet. But now ſhe was like a breathing ſpectre; and in the place of Princes ſhe had been obliged to the meaneſt ſervant of her houſehold for a morſel of bread! "Ah!" ſighed Daun to himſelf, "*Such is the beauty of man! In the morning it is green and groweth up: but in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered!*

It

It conſumeth away, as it were a moth fretting a garment!"

After an hour's converſation her Highneſs appeared faint; the Vicomteſſe obſerving it, told her viſitors it was time for them to depart, as ſhe was apprehenſive their ſociety would fatigue the ſpirits of her patient.

CHAP. VII.

" Cloth'd with tranſcendent brightneſs did'ſt outſhine
" Myriads tho' bright." MILTON.

" My flutt'ring heart, tumultuous with its bliſs,
" Would leap into thy boſom: 'tis too much.
" O let me preſs thee in my eager arms,
" And ſtrain thee hard to my tranſported breaſt!"
LEE.

AFTER they were withdrawn, Sigiſmund wrote a few affectionate lines to Madame Stahl: and going with it to Count Daun, he found his Lordſhip in the billiard-room, bidding a ceremonious adieu to Blackenberg.—This was the firſt moment in which Sigiſmund had ſeen him ſince his rencontre in the park; and the firſt moment that he had recollected it, ſo much had his mind been occupied by dearer

dearer intereſts. He had not for an inſtant doubted who was his antagoniſt; and he could not help feeling a kind of abhorrent ſhuddering ſeize him as he paſſed ſo implacable a villain. Blackenberg looked after him with the ſcrutinizing eyes of ſuſpicion; inwardly wondering at his blindneſs or raſhneſs, which could ſtimulate him thus to brave a danger, by which he had ſo lately nearly fallen. Sigiſmund ſaw Daun into his carriage; and ſlipping the letter into his hand, whiſpered to his Lordſhip to remember him with friendſhip to Count Hirchfeld; and then was returning into the hall, through the billiard-room, when the Ducheſs, ſeizing him by the arm, rudely pulled him back. "Bleſs me, Chevalier!" ſaid ſhe, "where have you been all the morning? what have you been doing?"—"Dreaming," anſwered he with indifference; and coldly bowing, was turning away. "Not ſo faſt!" cried ſhe, holding him; "this *hauteur* is ſo *nouvelle* in a Frenchman, that I muſt contemplate it a little longer."—"Your Highneſs is welcome to ruminate on me as long as you pleaſe!" ſaid he; and flinging himſelf down on a ſofa, he found himſelf ſeated by Lady Louiſe.

The

The languid ſmile of the fair beauty, as he placed himſelf beſide her, touched his ſenſibility. Bending towards her, with an unconſcious ſoftneſs in his voice and manner, he inquired after her indiſpoſition. The flutter which theſe few melting tones flung over her whole frame, covered her with bluſhes; and caſting down her head, ſhe ſaid her illneſs was almoſt over: "and," continued ſhe, her eyes as they fell catching the colour and the cypher on the buttons of his riding-coat, a ſudden conviction ran like a ſtream of nectar through her boſom; "and," ſaid ſhe, caſting up thoſe large fair orbs upon him full of *tender languiſhment*, "had it not been for the humane ſhelter of this very coat," at the ſame time laying her white hand upon his ſleeve, "what would have become of me?"—"I am happy that I obliged your Ladyſhip," replied Sigiſmund, turning off his eyes from the tender battery of hers: "it was an action too common to deſerve thanks; and I only lament it was not a better ſhield."—"Had I known to whom it belonged," ſaid ſhe heaving a penſive ſigh; "that it had covered your breaſt would have warmed mine."

"Bravo!"

"Bravo!" cried the malicious Ducheſs, ſtriking Sigiſmund on the ſhoulder; "is not this fine food for the vanity of our fugitive houſekeeper? Madame Stahl, Lady Louiſe," cried ſhe, turning to her, "will laugh at you for all theſe wooings of her Lord!" The indignation of Sigiſmund now conquered his confuſion; and riſing from the ſofa, he calmly ſaid, "The honour of Madame Stahl is as ſpotleſs as Heaven. And they who dare to caſt an aſperſion upon her purity would ſhake were I to whiſper but half their crimes!"—"Very likely," anſwered her Highneſs, with affected tranquillity; "but my ſweet friend here only repeats what ſhe has heard?" Lady Louiſe caught hold of his hand: "Indeed, Chevalier!" exclaimed ſhe, "I did not blame you much. And now that you have left the woman——"—"I have left no woman, Lady Louiſe," anſwered he compoſedly, and inwardly diſpleaſed with himſelf that two ſuch beings ſhould have ruffled him in the leaſt; "had I ever debaſed myſelf to the guilt you ſpeak of, I might have been capable of abandoning the creature whom I had ſeduced! I thank your Ladyſhip for the kind lenity which you would have ſhown to a conduct I could not

not pardon in myſelf. And as for your Serene Highneſs," added he, turning to the Ducheſs, "your many ſervices, and thoſe which were intended me, are regiſtered here;" and putting his hand to his forehead, he was leaving the room, when the ever-talking Ducheſs called after him, "And pray, Mr. Wiſdom! Why are my ſervices regiſtered in your head and not your heart? A mal-à-propos miſtake of your gallantry!"—"Not at all," anſwered he ſmiling, "my juſtice muſt inflict, where my mercy would forgive."——"Humph!" ſaid ſhe, and ſauntered off, humming a tune.

Her voice was more in harmony than her mind; for her doubts had now augmented to a certainty, that by ſome means De Cevennes knew of all their plots, and had determined to eſcape them, and revenge himſelf upon his enemies. In this troubled ſpirit ſhe ſtrolled about, ſeeking for her coadjutor, to explain her fears, and to conſult with him.

Thus were the minds of Blackenberg and his aſſociate toſſed with all the dreads attendant on the diſappointment of their ſchemes. The haughty ſilence of De Cevennes, and

the cold civilities of the Duke and his brother-in-law, ſtruck him with horror. That they knew of ſome of his atrocious crimes, he did not doubt. And after having endured, for the remainder of the day, the marked contempt of his gueſts, the chief part of whom, in compliance with the deference which narrowed minds pay to ſuperior rank, had taken their tone from the behaviour of his Highneſs, he quitted the ſupper-board at an early hour; and flying in a whirlwind of rage to find Freidrach, whom his affrighted conſcience now accuſed of having betrayed the ſecrets which he knew; he haſtened to the ſervants' apartments; and ruſhing into the room of the old man, with a reſolution to extort confeſſion from him, and to ſacrifice him to his fury; he flung open the door, and beheld his poor ſervant a breathleſs corpſe. He ſtaggered a few paces at the ſight, and dropped into a chair. Here was the dead body of a man whoſe ſoul he had ſteeped in murder. That ſoul was now before its Creator, trembling at the dreadful fiat, which alſo awaited himſelf! His ſins, hot as flames, glared upon him. And ſpringing ſuddenly upon

upon his feet, he flew out of the chamber into the gallery.

There again his remorſe continued to gnaw him. But it was not the remorſe of ſorrow for the perpetration of the crime, but of fear at its puniſhment. The communications of the Ducheſs convinced him that the outlines of his guilt were diſcovered; and that Freidrach had taken this method of eaſing his burthened conſcience, he hardly doubted. That the Chevalier had received the dying confidence of the man, he believed; and ſtarting, leſt the torments of the damned ſhould begin with him here, by condemning him to a public death, he reſolved to ſecure his own life for yet a little longer, by the immediate extinction of that of the young Chevalier.

With theſe reſolutions; and a ſecret wiſh, that if Freidrach had been many days dead, the wretched Roſamund might die for want of ſuſtenance; and that this hope ſhould be acccompliſhed, he determined never to reviſit her. Sunk ten thouſand fathom deeper in the abyſs of his wickedneſs, he cloſed his chamber-door; awaiting with impatience the mo-

ment in which the ſum of his iniquity ſhould be fulfilled.

Sigiſmund was wearied by the various emotions of the day; and depreſſed to melancholy by the drooping converſation of Lady Emma, whoſe dejected ſoul ſeemed to hang upon every word which fell from his lips; and yet whoſe weakened ſpirits hardly ſupported her to breathe a few liſtleſs words to him whoſe attention ſhe wiſhed to engage. Was he not the favourite friend of that Hirchfeld, to whom her young heart clung with the fondeſt intereſt? He was; and to ſecure his eſteem was her earneſt effort. Thus heavily dragged on his time till the hour of retiring. Lady Emma went to her own room; and Sigiſmund to the door of his mother's apartment; the Vicomteſſe's woman told him that the lady had been many minutes gone to reſt.

Almoſt lulled to drowſineſs himſelf, by the monotony of the evening and the watching of the night before, he quietly walked to his own chamber; and taking off his clothes, threw over himſelf a dreſſing-gown, while he ſat up in his bed to re-read the little narrative of

of Madame Stahl, before he ſubmitted it to the peruſal of his mother in the morning.—He had hardly got through ſix pages when he dropped aſleep, and his neglected lamp extinguiſhed itſelf.

The repeater of Blackenberg ſtruck two. With all the daſtard ſenſations of a coward's heart, and tremulous limbs, he took up his ſword; guided by the light of that moon which has ſo often ſhone on the bloody hands of the murderer, he gently puſhed open the chamber-door of Sigiſmund. He pauſed a moment, trembling leſt his very breathing ſhould awaken his prey. But liſtening, he heard not the ſmalleſt ſound. He ſlid in, cloſing to the door with as quiet a motion. He ſtepped ſoftly towards the bed. As he got into the middle of the floor, the boards creeked under his foot; and the next moment Sigiſmund heaved a deep ſigh. Blackenberg nearly bit his lip through with affright. But all was ſtill again. The curtains of the bed were undrawn. He ſtretched out his neck to look at his victim, and ſaw his eyes were ſealed in profound ſleep. This gave him courage, and examining the edge of his ſword,

he advanced hesitating, and on tip-toe to the side of the pillow. There he stood, his satanic lips parting with a triumphant grin. He laid one hand on the sheet, gently raised it; and already had he the other pointing the weapon at the breast of Sigismund, when both sheet and sword fell from his hands together. A black flood seemed rolling towards him, and the drowning form of Xavier, pale and sinking in the waves, swam before his sight; he reeled, and straining his eye-balls to tear them from such horror, dropped senseless on the ground.

The soft strains of Heaven now breathed through the apartment; and Sigismund unclosing his eyelids, the seraphic form of his brother, robed in the splendors of paradise, opened upon his view. As he gazed, his flitting soul seemed quivering on the verge of eternity. He could not ask himself if he were awake, for the celestial eyes of Xavier beamed conviction upon his. He waved him with his arm; Sigismund sprang from the bed, and advanced with an awful step towards the smiling Seraph; when sinking on his knees, he rivetted his gaze on this son of Heaven, whose etherial hands crossed over the head of his

his brother, and his beſeeching eyes caſt up to the God who ſent him;—the ſublimated ſoul of Sigiſmund ſeemed to ſwoon with rapture, and he ſunk upon the floor.

The firſt who recovered from this ſhock to human nature was Blackenberg. He looked around, and ſeeing nothing now more ſupernatural than the planets which ſhone on him, he raiſed himſelf and perceiving Sigiſmund lying extended on the ground, pale, and apparently lifeleſs, he pondered for a moment. "No," ſaid he to himſelf, "not hell itſelf ſhould frighten me from my own preſervation!" So muttering, he ſnatched up his ſword, and made a determined puſh at the defenceleſs breaſt of the Chevalier. But in the hurry of the action the point ſlipt its aim, and it only pierced the arm.

The guſhing blood reſtored its poſſeſſor. Sigiſmund had juſt time to ward off the ſecond blow; and ſpringing up, flung himſelf on the aſſaſſin. A deſperate wreſtle now enſued.—The native elaſticity of Sigiſmund bound his enemy as in fetters; and already had he thrown him to the ground, when Blackenberg drew from his waiſtcoat a dagger, and thruſt

thruſt it into the uncovered boſom of his anticipated prey. "Wretch!" cried the young Count, as he held him faſt down, with his wounds pouring upon him. "I ſurrender you to the juſtice of that God whom you have defied! I would not imbrue my hands even in the blood of a villain. Take your life! and know, that it is the ſon of Koningſtein who gives it to you!—that Sigiſmund whom you have twice murdered!" Faint with the bleeding of his wounds, he left his graſp as he ſpoke, and wrapping his gown around him, he left the room, and tottering towards the Vicomte's chamber, puſhed open the door, and ſtaggering in, fell into a chair.

De Solignac hearing a noiſe undrew his curtain; ſeeing by the light of the lamp who it was, he leapt out of bed and flying to his adopted ſon, who had ſwooned, almoſt fainted at the ſight of the blood which dyed the whole boſom of his gown. But terror conquered anguiſh; and haſtily ſtaunching the wounds with plenty of linen which he had near him, Sigiſmund opened his eyes. The Vicomte led him to the bed, laid him on it, and gave him a little water to ſwallow. He would

would have attempted to relate the cauſe of his ſituation, but finding his weakneſs incapable of it, when his Lordſhip aſked him who had done it, he could only ſhake his head, and kiſs the hand that graſped his.

Terrified to madneſs, de Solignac called his valet who lay in a neighbouring cloſet; and told him to go and bring the Duke and the Duke's ſurgeon. Fortunately this gentleman never left his Highneſs, who being ſubject to epileptic fits, never travelled without medical aſſiſtance. In ten minutes the meſſenger returned with Deux-Ponts and Dr. Heiſter. The Duke ruſhed into the room, and haſtening up to the bed-ſide of Sigiſmund, as he looked on his pallid, but yet-ſmiling face, impatiently inquired the cauſe of this cruel accident. "I cannot tell!" anſwered de Solignac, wringing his hands and pacing the room in an agony: "but do you, good Sir!" cried he, catching the arm of the ſurgeon, "do you go to the dear boy, and tell me what is my hope?" Heiſter begged he would compoſe himſelf; and whiſpering the Duke to detain his Lordſhip at the other end of the room, he went to Sigiſmund.

By

By the aſſiſtance of the valet he inſpected the wounds, and applied to them a ſlight dreſſing: declaring as he did it, that the ſtab in the arm would be well in a day or two; and that the truſt in the breaſt would be productive of no danger, as it lay only amongſt the muſcles. Quietneſs for four-and-twenty hours, would regain all that he had loſt. This information rejoiced the two noblemen; and according to the requeſt of the ſurgeon, after they had preſſed the hands of the meek ſufferer, they both quitted the room for the adjoining one; where they determined to ſit the remainder of the night, whilſt Heiſter watched by the ſide of his charge. Sigiſmund would have ſpoken to them as they lingered at the door, but his Doctor would not permit him to make the ſmalleſt exertion, ſaying, that on his tranquillity depended the celerity of his cure.

When the friends were withdrawn, he gave his patient a compoſing opiate; and in a little time after had the pleaſure of ſeeing him fall into a ſalutary ſlumber.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

" Gods! who could ſee the graces of his youth,
" His cauſe, his innocence, the hero's mien,
" Manly and firm, yet ſoften'd by diſtreſs;
" Gods! who could ſee him, and not gaze entranced
" In ecſtacy, and love!"

THE RIVAL SISTERS.

BEFORE morning dawned, the anxious debate of the Vicomte and the Duke, regarding who might be the perpetrator of this horrid act, was interrupted by an inſtantaneous ringing of bells, and a calling of voices, all over the Caſtle.

His Highneſs opened the door of the apartment to ſee if he could learn what was the matter. At that moment a ſervant puſhed by him, exclaiming in a loud voice to one of his fellows, " My Lord is dying."—" Who do you ſpeak of?" cried the Duke, detaining the Vicomte in his arms, as at the ſound of theſe words he was ruſhing out of the chamber. " Count Blackenberg," anſwered the man, as he haſtily paſſed them; " he is dying."

" Great

"Great God! what has been doing here?" ejaculated de Solignac, falling back on a ſeat. "Remain where you are!" interrupted the Duke with trepidation, "and I will go and ſit by the Chevalier while I diſpatch Heiſter to the Count."—"I will accompany you," cried the Vicomte riſing; "it will require the aſſiſtance of us both to keep my Theodore quiet during all this buſtle. My God! how they call! How they bang the doors! They will kill him with this violence!"—"Your agitation is worſe," anſwered his Highneſs; "let me watch alone with young Koningſtein, and I will anſwer for his ſafety? The Vicomteſſe may be terrified: go you and keep her in her chamber, leſt ſhe or the Princeſs ſhould hear of the accident; for then, the conſequences to all might be perilous!" The Vicomte immediately ſaw the reaſonableneſs of this advice, and haſtened towards the apartments of his wife, while the Duke entered the chamber of the ſleeping Sigiſmund.—His Highneſs gently taking his ſeat by the bed, diſpatched his ſurgeon to the aſſiſtance of the Count.

The

The uproar in the Caſtle increaſed every moment. The ſervants running from room to room hurrying each other; ſome to help thoſe who were already around their lord; and the reſt preparing to fly to all parts of the country for more medical aid. At laſt the ſcreams of the Counteſs, as ſhe ruſhed down the gallery towards her huſband's chamber, alarmed the Duke for the repoſe of his charge; and ſpringing up, he entirely covered the head of Sigiſmund with his own cloak, hoping by that means to impede the ſound.—The ſound was impeded; for the Chevalier did not awake; and his Highneſs ſat liſtening in an aſtounding whirlwind of ſuſpicion, pity, and horror, that he had never known before, to the piercing ſhrieks of her Ladyſhip as they faded away by the intervention of the paſſages.

As the tumult in the Caſtle gradually ſubſided, he drew the mantle from the face of the Chevalier, who yet ſlept. "Thank God!" ſaid the Duke to himſelf, looking on the tranquil features of Sigiſmund, "thou ſleepeſt ſweetly, when perhaps thy bloody antagoniſt is in the laſt agonies of expiring life!" That ſome rencontre had taken place between

Blackenberg and the young Koningſtein, he ſtrongly ſuppoſed: and that the Count was now dying under the wounds which Sigiſmund had given him, he as firmly believed.

So paſſed the hours till the ſun had riſen ſome time. Dr. Heiſter returned to the chamber of his youthful patient; and the Duke and he retiring to the fartheſt corner of the room, his Highneſs, in a lowered voice, inquired if the wounds of Blackenberg were dangerous. "Wounds!" anſwered the ſurgeon; "My Lord, he has received no wounds: he has been poiſoned; and the oils have been applied ſo late, owing to his having ſuffered a great deal before he could awaken his attendants, that I hardly think it is in the power of man to ſave him."—"Poiſoned!" reiterated the Duke, a cold dew ſtanding on his forehead. "Yes," replied Heiſter; "and by a drug of the moſt deadly nature."—"Who gave it to him?" aſked his Highneſs in a tone of dread. "When his Lordſhip was able to ſpeak," returned he, "he ſaid he believed his diſorder was occaſioned by ſome drops which the Ducheſs had given to him. I aſked to ſee the bottle; but it could not be found;

and

and on ſending to the chamber of her Highneſs to requeſt it, ſhe would not be ſeen."

"Well!" cried the Duke, "I thank God that it is any one but this amiable young man! I had half ſuſpected him."—"No, no my Lord!" interrupted the ſurgeon; "the Ducheſs muſt, I fear, be an intended murderess; for when his Lordſhip happened to hear one of the ſervants murmering the word *poiſon* to another, he ſtarted up in his bed, and raved like a lunatic, calling her Highneſs by every opprobrious epithet that man could imagine. When he was cooler, I took the liberty to queſtion him on the cauſe of his fears of her; and with a mixture of maledictions on her name, I gathered, that, for ſome reaſon or another, inſtead of going to his own room to reſt, when the family retired, he had called into her Highneſs's chamber; where having ſome converſation with her which he had cauſe to think alarmed her for her own ſafety, he took ſuddenly indiſpoſed, and ſhe offered to give him a few of her reviving drops; ſaying they would be of ſervice to him, as they always were to her when her ſpirits were deranged: he took

them, and departed to his own apartment: he ſlept none; and towards morning ſuch deadly tortures came over his body, as nothing but poiſon could produce: he called on his ſervants, whom with ſome difficulty he arouſed; and when I came, I found him ſpeechleſs."

"Righteous God!" exclaimed the Duke, "how myſterious, but how juſt are thy ways!"—"Ah!" cried the Doctor, "ſorry am I to accuſe any man: but from the ſeveral drops of blood which are ſprinkled on the boſom and ſleeves of the Count's ſhirt, I fear that it is to his arm we owe the ſufferings of the Chevalier: moſt likely the Ducheſs is concerned in the guilt; and to deſtroy the evidence of his Lordſhip, who might have wiſhed to have implicated her in his puniſhment, ſhe has taken this method to rid him of life and herſelf of her fears."

Farther diſcuſſion on the ſubject was interrupted by the entrance of de Solignac, whoſe impatience to ſee his dear Theodore could not be any longer reſtrained. Having anſwered the queſtions of the Vicomteſſe relative

lative to the buſtle in the Caſtle, by telling her that Blackenberg was taken ſuddenly and dangerouſly ill; he implored her to go to the Princeſs; to keep all intelligence from her, whilſt he went to inquire after the progreſs of the Count's diſeaſe.

"Ah! go, my dear Lord!" anſwered ſhe: "God will avenge the injuries of our child! perhaps the poor wretch may not live!"— "However he is fated," interrupted the Vicomte; "may God pardon him his many crimes, and comfort your unfortunate ſiſter." The only reply of the Vicomteſſe was a deep ſigh: ſhe could not weep: her ſoul yearned for the Counteſs; and ſhivering at the proſpect of what muſt be her feelings, whether he lived or died; ſhe turned to the chamber of the Princeſs: and the Vicomte haſtened towards the apartment of her adopted ſon.

After receiving the moſt flattering aſſurances from Dr. Heiſter reſpecting Sigiſmund, he liſtened with compaſſion to the account of the ſituation of Blackenberg. Solicitous to know whether a contrition might not ariſe in his breaſt on the proſpect of his pearl, he once

more quitted the room, and entered the veſtibule which led to the Count's apartments.—Several gentlemen of the faculty, and many of the nobles viſiting at the Caſtle, were there aſſembled. At the appearance of the Vicomte, as brother-in-law to the ſick Count, they all roſe and ſurrounded him; ſome condoling with him, and others aſking him thoſe queſtions they could better reſolve.

"Gentlemen!" ſaid he to the Doctors, "it is to you whom I apply for information reſpecting the Count Blackenberg: what is his danger?"—"Paſt all hope," anſwered one of them: "Dr. Heiſter had done almoſt all that could be done, before we arrived: but the remedy was too late: the poiſon had mingled with the juices of his body, and he muſt die, though he may yet linger for a few days." "He muſt die!" repeated de Solignac in accents of ponderation and deep thought; and flinging himſelf into a chair, he muſed for a little time, then ſuddenly ſtarting, "And does he know of his danger? aſked he. "He does," replied one; "and for that reaſon his Lordſhip has deſired to be left alone with his ſecretary, that he may dictate ſome papers againſt

againſt the Ducheſs Saxe Zeits, who has left the Caſtle."—"What then?" exclaimed de-Solignac, leaping from his ſeat with the electric ſhock of horror: "then ſhe poiſoned him wilfully?"

"I cannot affirm," replied his anſwerer; "but upon our pronouncing his death to be inevitable, and declaring that he muſt die in conſequence of thoſe drops which ſhe had adminiſtered, the chamberlain repeated to her Highneſs what we had ſaid, and he tells us, that in the moſt terrific agitation, regardleſs of the darkneſs which morning had not yet diſperſed, ſhe ordered her equipage, and with her whole ſuite left the Caſtle before the dawn."—"Well, this is ſtrange: what cauſe could ſhe have to deſtroy the Count? perhaps —but I will go myſelf to my brother-in-law," ſaid he, interrupting himſelf: "I will hear what he has to ſay."

Without any attempt from the company to ſtay him, he opened the chamber-door, and advanced to the bed-ſide of the Count. The moment Blackenberg perceived him, he haſtily cloſed his eyes: but the Vicomte drew near,

near, and the ſecretary retired from the room. "My Lord," ſaid de Solignac in an awful and mournful voice, "I am grieved to ſee you thus." Blackenberg made no reply. His Lordſhip fearfully, and after a ſhort pauſe, reſumed: "An evil ſpell has ſurely been over this houſe; for laſt night my dear boy ruſhed into my room ſtreaming with blood: his own blood; and—O God! pardon the wretch who did it!"—"Is he dead?" aſked Blackenberg with an affectation of compoſure that almoſt irritated to anger the pitying feelings of de Solignac.

"Dead!" reiterated the Vicomte with an irreſiſtible ſcorn marking his words: "no; he lives to accuſe the hand that ſtabbed him." "And he has ſent you, my Lord!" cried the Count, ſtarting from his pillow, his eye-balls glaring with rage, "to inſult a dying man in his laſt hours! If I lifted my arm againſt him, I did it from juſtice: he had plotted my life!" —"O Count! Count!" ſaid de Solignac in a voice of mortal horror, "he has never yet opened his lips to me ſince the deed happened: you have convicted yourſelf: he never injured you: and grieved am I that a dying man can provoke

provoke his God by ſuch a falſehood."—"Vicomte!" exclaimed Blackenberg, his voice cracked by his burſting paſſion, "were I not as I am, you durſt not ſpeak to me thus!"—"Yes, my Lord!" anſwered he calmly? "I would ſpeak to you thus under every ſituation; but more reluctantly now than at any other time, becauſe I would not *bruiſe the broken reed!*'—"Sir!" interrupted the Count, "was it to inſult me, that under the maſk of friendſhip, you turned from your way to France to introduce a reptile into my houſe? What? what do you mean?"

"That reptile, you know too well, is the injured heir of this houſe; and I addreſs you, not to inſult but to befriend you. I would tell you that you are on the brink of that awful world where the ſecrets of the conſcience muſt be told! For God's ſake! for the ſake of your immortal ſoul, make ſome reſtitution! Do not thruſt from you the hand of mercy! Obey but the mild mandates of the Saviour, and your heart will be made as white as Sigiſmund's!"

"Leave

"Leave my room, Sir!" cried Blackenberg, almoſt choking with rage: "I am not the coward you take me for; what I have done, I have done!"—"And better had it been undone!" ſaid the Vicomte as he roſe from his chair: "and though I am no prieſt, yet in the name of Chriſt I adjure you to blot out theſe deeds by your repentance!"—"Vicomte! if you dare longer proceed in a language ſo inſolent!" exclaimed the Count, "I will ſummon my attendants!"—"To do what?" aſked de Solignac, his tone ſoftening with compaſſion to the ſelf-deluded wretch: "they may ſhut me out; but they cannot cloſe from you the conviction of your crimes. Yes, Blackenberg, I ſpeak not from malice, but from a feeling that is man's greateſt boaſt! I dare your hatred! I would dare that of the whole world, could I reſcue, by thoſe means, one ſoul from the deſtruction of its guilt!"

"Whatever my guilt is!" interrupted his Lordſhip with added fury, "it is mine own! you will not burn for my crimes; though you may have the mean office of ſtanding at the tribunal of Heaven as one of my accuſers!"—

The

The tears ruſhed over the eyes of de Solignac: "Hardened, hardened man!" cried he; "can you conſider yourſelf dying and talk thus?—But ſtay! there is one in this Caſtle whoſe preſence may bring back ſome virtue to your heart! Be ſilent for one moment!" cried he, interrupting the angry reply of the Count; "and know that the Princeſs Chriſtina lives!" "Lives!" ejaculated Blackenberg; "why ſhe has been dead theſe fourteen years: Vicomte you are impoſed on: this is ſome trick of the creature who would palm himſelf on you as the heir of Koningſtein." As he ſpoke he trembled; and faint with a tempeſt of overwhelming doubts he preſſed his hand upon his burning brain.

"No, my Lord!" returned de Solignac, perceiving that he was at laſt ſtruck, and determined to retain his aſcendant; "no impoſition is here: the adopted child of my love I received, with my own hands, from the care of fiſhermen, who reſcued him from the waves of the Elbe: I have foſtered him with a father's affection until this hour, when he has diſcovered to me the quality of his birth, and his rights to this Caſtle." The Count ſtarted from his pillow. "Stay!" continued the Vicomte,

comte, putting him gently down with his hand; "the fact is too ſtrongly proved for contradiction: I have ſummoned thoſe men: Madame Stahl will ſwear to his identity; and his mother will declare him as her ſon. Do you remember the evening in which you drew your ſword againſt the young Sigiſmund near the ſepulchre? Do you remember the ghaſtly figure at the ſight of which you fled? I ſuppoſe you then believed it was her ſpirit!" The Count fell, with a piercing groan, back on his bed." "Yes," reſumed his Lordſhip, "that was Chriſtina! Juſt eſcaped from the bars of her priſon, ſhe came to ſave her child!"

"Leave me! leave me!" ſtill more heavily groaned the Count. Unwilling to preſs him too hard, the exhauſted and inwardly agonized Vicomte left the room; and as he went through the veſtibule, he requeſted ſome of the faculty to attend the Count, whilſt he wiſhed the reſt a good morning, and proceeded to join the Duke in his own chamber.

When he entered the apartment, Sigiſmund was ſitting up in his bed and diſcourſing

ſing with his Highneſs and Heiſter, after having related to them the whole of what had paſſed the preceding night. The horrors of de Solignac were raiſed to abſolute tortures when the Duke repeated the ſtory to him.—He ſat rocking himſelf in a chair as he hearkened; and when his Highneſs had concluded, he ſtarted from his ſeat, and flying to the ſide of Sigiſmund, he caught his hand, and in the impetuoſity of ſtrong feeling, he cried, "My godlike boy! Heaven is thy guardian? So noble, ſo forgiving!"—"My more than father!" ſaid Sigiſmund, looking on him with the gliſtening eyes of gratitude; "I have only acted as a Chriſtian! I would not take his life: and I have done enough in leaving him to the vengeance of the God of Juſtice. Had he not killed my brother I could have pardoned him all! but that—O! he has torn from me my ſoul's deareſt treaſure! and that I never never can forgive!"

The grief-ſtruck heart of Sigiſmund bled at this recollection; his humid eyes now rained in torrents over his cheek; the whole expreſſion of his countenance was changed. "Theodore! have pity on me?" cried the now weeping

ing Vicomte. Sigiſmund threw himſelf on his neck. "I know I am wrong—but the ſight of my brother has eclipſed the world!—All is to me faint!—O! to be with him!" cried he, in an enraptured voice, and ſtretching out his arms towards the now brilliant ſky; "to live for ever in his ſmiles! to fold that angelic form to my fraternal boſom!" His ſoul ſeemed to emanate from his eyes; and ſuddenly claſping his hands together, he cloſed thoſe eyes, and falling back, lay motionleſs on the pillow.

The groans of the anguiſhed Vicomte now reverberated through the apartment; and the Duke who ſupported his toſſing head upon his boſom, bathed it with the tears of commiſeration. At that moment of deſpair the door opened, and the Vicomteſſe ſtood thunderſtruck on the threſhold, gazing on the ſcene with amazement and horror. The Duke haſtily looked up, and waved her to withdraw; but the action and his mournful countenance the more alarmed her, and coming forward ſhe caught her huſband in her arms. "O God!" cried he, and fainted on her boſom. Her frantic ſhrieks now roſe to the cries of madneſs;

madneſs; and ſcreaming, though almoſt lifeleſs on his neck, "Can he feel ſo for the danger of the Count?" The Duke flew to her with reſtoratives, whilſt the ſervants and gueſts of the Caſtle crowded into the apartment.

Amongſt the latter was Dr. Heiſter, trembling and pale with affright. What could have happened? He had left the Chevalier ſo well! But the ſcene ſtruck him like a thunderbolt; and fearing the worſt, he darted paſt the ſtill ſenſeleſs Vicomte, and pulling down the clothes, as he dreaded, he beheld the lifeleſs body of Sigiſmund extended on the bed.

At a ſight ſo unexpected all the emotions of the Vicomteſſe were huſhed. She ſtood fixed like a ſtatue, gazing on the object before her. The ſervants now applied their cares to the Vicomte, who began to recover. The noblemen thronged around the bed of the Chevalier, loudly lamenting his death, and expreſſing their aſtoniſhment at the ſight of wounds which they had never heard of his having received. The confounded Heiſter ſtood petrified at the aſhy and breathleſs form

of his patient; and hardly daring to hope from the agonized grief of de Solignac, but that ſome horrid circumſtance had indeed robbed him of life, he ventured with trepidation to touch his wriſt.

In the hurried voice of tranſport he exclaimed, "All is well! His pulſe beats!"—At the delightful ſound the Vicomteſſe ſprang from the ſpot on which ſhe ſtood, and flinging herſelf proſtrate on the ground amongſt the moſt convulſive heavings, and hardly articulate cries of rapture, ſhe clung to the knees of Heiſter, embracing his feet, and writhing in all the mental agony of a too great guſh of bliſs.

The Vicomte was alſo there, weeping over the reviving face of his adopted ſon, whoſe eyes in obedience to the exertions of the Doctor now opened, and ſhone with full affection upon the bent orbs of de Solignac, who looked on him with an anxiety which only thoſe who dote to almoſt idolatry can feel. "My father!" ſaid Sigiſmund, giving his hand to the Vicomte. "My adored Theodore!" cried the Vicomteſſe, ſtarting up, and throwing

throwing herſelf upon the boſom of her darling. A long ſilence now enſued.

Lady de Solignac was led out, drowned in the mingled tears of aſtoniſhment and delight. She leaned on the Duke, who attending her to her own dreſſing-room; and amidſt her moſt acute expreſſions of deteſtation, affection, and fear, related the whole tranſaction of the rencontre and its conſequences. After having ſeen her more compoſed, he left her with the advice to break the affair with caution to the Princeſs, who might otherwiſe be afflicted by the continued and ill-accounted for abſence of her ſon.

When he again entered the Vicomte's apartments he found ſmiles once more irradiating every countenance. Sigiſmund was converſing with cheerfulneſs to ſeveral of the noblemen, who were congratulating him with the warmeſt zeal on the aſſumption of his real rank; for de Solignac had before the re-entrance of Deux-Ponts explained to all preſent the cauſe of the illneſs of the Chevalier; and in that relation told the hiſtory of his

birth, and declared him as the rightful Lord of Koningſtein.

The young Count received their ardent felicitations with that ſmiling urbanity which is ever the property of a benevolent heart; and when the Duke appeared he gave him his hand, and thanked him eloquently for the care that he had taken of the Vicomteſſe, and the attention which he had with ſo parental an earneſtneſs given to himſelf.

Dr. Heiſter once more uſed his influence; and for the ſake of his patient ordered the whole company out of the room, not excepting even Deux-Ponts or the Vicomte; and left once more alone; he again ſoothed his charge to tranquillity and repoſe.

CHAP. IX.

"Wilt thou draw near the nature of the Gods?
"Draw near them then in being merciful:
"Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge."

SHAKESPEARE.

ABOUT the cloſe of evening as the Vicomte ſat by the ſide of Sigiſmund, he received

ceived a meſſage from the Count deſiring his preſence: he attended immediately; and found his Lordſhip, alone, with the marks of approaching death bearing ſtrong upon his face. De Solignac looked at him with feelings, ah! how different from thoſe which he felt when he thought the pure ſpirit of Sigiſmund had fled its body! his eye ſeemed to purſue it to the ſkies: but here!—he drew towards the bed.

Blackenberg pauſed not a moment, but began: he held out to him a ſealed packet; "Here, Vicomte!" ſaid he, "take theſe papers: they contain accuſations againſt the moſt villainous woman that ever breathed: ſhe it was who nurtured my hatred againſt this ſon of Chriſtina: ſhe told me that he had deſigns on my life and reputation; and may hell rack her for it! She has robbed me of exiſtence herſelf! I ſent for you, my Lord! not to hear you preach again, but to demand of your ſtern juſtice vengeance upon this devil! If you cannot by the extinction of her life, blaſt her with diſgrace!"—"Her conduct will ever enſure that," anſwered the Vicomte: "and, my Lord! be you thankful if it was more

her

her inſtigations than your own will which would have hurled you to a deed ſo black! Think not now of revenge, but rather try to make your own peace with Heaven!"

"What if I did?" anſwered Blackenberg ſullenly; "would that prevent this damned Sigiſmund from blowing my character all over the empire? How he will exult to hold me up as a villain"—"Have you forgotten," interrupted the Vicomte, "that he gave you your life? Can ſuch a being do a deed to deſerve the cenſure of Count Blackenberg? No, my Lord! he ſays the repetition of your crimes ſhall die with yourſelf: in pity to humanity, he prays for the murderer of his brother!"—"O!" cried the Count in a voice of horror, and unconſcious to himſelf: "O! that in the moment I breathe my laſt my ſoul too might be extinguiſhed!" His groans echoed through the room; when ſuddenly recollecting himſelf he turned his head towards the ſhuddering Vicomte: "Tell that Sigiſmund that as a dying man I hold him to his promiſe. If he mentions what I have done to any living creature after I am gone, my ſpirit ſhall torture him for perjury!"—

"Count

"Count Blackenberg!" cried the Vicomte ſolemnly; "how unlike is your language to that of a man ſolicitous for the pardon of his God! Recollect all your crimes: and though the remembrance kills you with remorſe, that remorſe will be your hope: it will reconcile you to your ſaviour: wiſh to blot out your crimes by the deareſt blood of your heart! wiſh to be redeemed, and you are ſo!"—The eyes of the Count flaſhed fire; he gnaſhed his teeth, and gnawed the very clothes in the turbulent deſpite of his boſom.

De Solignac looked at him with the deſpairing gaze of one who beholds another wilfully leap into the gulph of perdition: he caught his arm; and exclaimed in a conjuring voice, "O Count! *Rend your heart, and not your garments!* Hear me, and believe me; that repentance, a real repentance, even at this late hour, will ſave you!"—"Leave me then!" cried Blackenberg: "I may conſider of it." This ungracious reply of the Count was yet ſomething gained and de Solignac quitted the apartment.

In

In the ante-chamber to Sigiſmund's room the Vicomte was met by one of Count Daun's ſervants, booted, juſt as he came off his journey. The man gave a letter into his Lordſhip's hand, and begged him to read it immediately, as the general was waiting below. De Solignac haſtily opened it; and read as follows:

" My dear Vicomte!

" I am now waiting for you in the crimſon-ſaloon, aſtoniſhed at what I have heard has paſſed in the Caſtle during my ſhort abſence; and liſtening, whilſt I write, to the friendly Hirchfeld, as he comforts my weeping ſiſter. Yes, my Lord! in the amiable Madame Stahl, whoſe perſevering faithfulneſs to the unfortunate family of Koningſtein we have all ſo warmly admired, I have diſcovered a long loſt ſiſter, whoſe name I had branded with every diſhonourable title: but I will explain all when we meet: only let me now add my requeſt, that you will diſcover our arrival to our ſuffering young friend: and when you come to us, tell me if my poor Leopoldina may now be admitted to the ſight of her favourite;

vourite; for without this ſhe will not be aſſured of his ſafety.

Yours,

"D——."

Surpriſed at the ſtrange circumſtance, and rejoiced at their arrival, he entered the chamber of Sigiſmund; and telling him that his three friends were below, gave the letter into his hand to peruſe. He read it with delight. Immediately ſeeing through the whole affair, and ſmiling at his miſtake in regard to the Duke, he conjured his Lordſhip to bring the party directly to his room. Dr. Heiſter gave his conſent to the interview; ſaying, that the Chevalier, from his youth and excellent conſtitution, would be able to riſe on the morrow.

In ten minutes after the withdrawing of the Vicomte he entered again, followed by the three friends and his Highneſs, who had joined them in the ſaloon, and to whom the General had explained all. The meeting between Sigiſmund and Leopoldina was tender and affectionate. Riſing from his neck, ſhe raiſed her hands and eyes to heaven, and breathed

ſo

ſo ardent and eloquent a thankſgiving for all theſe bleſſings, that there was not a heart preſent which would not have worſhipped her as a ſaint, and that did not ejaculate the final *amen* with a fervour and ſolemnity that ſanctified every breaſt.

The next day Sigiſmund awoke with the aſcending ſun: he requeſted Heiſter to aſſiſt him to riſe; for his pleaſure at ſeeing his friends the preceding night was ſunk in the impatience of meeting them again this morning. He had hardly put on his clothes, and thrown round him his dreſſing-gown, when Hirchfeld tapped at the door, and the next moment opened it.

At the ſight of him Sigiſmund held out his hand and ſqueezed his fervently. As they ſat down ſide by ſide Heiſter ſaw in their animated countenances their wiſh to be alone; and therefore, without further heſitation he withdrew.

The burthened heart of Sigiſmund broke out in ten thouſand tender confidences: he ran ſlightly over his recent danger; dwelt with

with ſublime ecſtaſy upon the appearance of his brother; the bleſſing which his ſeraphic eyes had called upon his head; and hung with gratitude on the affection of the General. Leopoldina, the Duke, the Vicomte, and the reſt of thoſe whom he loved. Hirchfeld liſtened to him; and then in his turn began to deſcant on his aſtoniſhment at the diſcovery concerning Leopoldina.

"I muſt acknowledge," cried he, "I did ſuſpect ſomething regarding her and the General; becauſe on the night of your ride to the Margravine's, when I gave her your letter I thought ſhe would have died with terror: ſhe told me of all men living ſhe could leaſt bear to meet the Count Daun; and accordingly to prevent it I carried her off myſelf: judge then our ſurpriſe when the veteran did appear. The poor Lady's indiſpoſition had detained me with her; and I was ſitting in the drawing-room with her and my ſiſter, when in bounced the Count, and down fell Madame Stahl: he ſtood like a ſtatue, while the Baroneſs applied ſalts to our charge: when ſhe opened her eyes, the Count advanced to her with a ſolemnity that thrilled us all; and tak-

ing her hand, he ſaid in a voice of tenderneſs, "Leopoldina! may I yet call you my ſiſter?" At a ſalutation ſo kind ſhe flung her arms around his neck and exclaimed, "I have never erred but in leaving you! Koningſtein I ever loved! and to his memory my heart has ever been conſecrated! For his children I have done this! and O! forgive me that I have given you ſuch cauſe to doubt my honour!"

"You can judge the reſt," continued Hirchfeld, ſeeing a few tears ſtealing over the face of Sigiſmund; "and here we are to congratulate you on your new titles! and to witneſs the death of the raſcal who would have deſtroyed you!—But how is Lady Emma?" aſked he abruptly, and buſily ſtirring the fire to conceal the vivid colour which mounted to his cheeks. "As you would have her, dear Hirchfeld!" replied Sigiſmund, ſmiling, "actually ſick for your return. She certainly loves you; and ſo gentle a heart ought not to be trifled with. Propoſe to the Duke. The Count Daun has promiſed to me to be your advocate." "Then the Devil may marry Louiſe for me!" exclaimed Hirchfeld, and jumping up

up from his chair he acted ten thouſand wild extravagancies; catching Sigiſmund to his breaſt, dancing, ſinging, hallowing, wringing his hands with rapture, and leaping round the room like a madman. The Chevalier firſt ſmiled, and then actually laughed.

"Well, well, Koningſtein," cried the tranſported lover, turning on him with pleaſure dancing in his eyes; "at ſome future day I ſhall be revenged on you for all this! Remember, *Love to a yielding heart is a king, but to a reſiſting a tyrant!*"—"When I fall under his ſceptre—" ſaid Sigiſmund.—"He will give you Therſite's thump," cried Hirchfeld, "and make you ſmart for bragging!"—"No, no, replied he, laughing, "I intended to ſay if he rules me as he ſways you, I ſhall be transformed from my preſent ſelf into an abſolute lunatic!"

The high-ſwelling anſwer to this was interrupted by the entrance of the Count Daun, the Duke, and Leopoldina. As they congratulated Sigiſmund on his renovated looks, Hirchfeld ſlipped out of the door to go in queſt of the miſtreſs of his enthuſiaſm.

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Leopoldina preſſed the young Koningſtein to her boſom; and with ſome reluctance left the affectionate preſſure of his hand to put her's into that of the Vicomteſſe, who now entered the room, led in by her Lord. Inſtead of the formal ſalutation of a firſt interview, Lady de Solignac ſtrained to her breaſt the early friend of her dear ſon; and aſſured her Ladyſhip of her ſiſterly affection, with a fervour that awoke the tenderneſs of Leopoldina: while ſhe put her hand into that of the Vicomte, ſhe declared to him, that the friendſhip of the Vicomteſſe, next to the love of Sigiſmund and her brother, would be her deareſt boaſt. After an hour's bliſsful converſation, de Solignac propoſed that Lady Leopoldina ſhould be preſented to the Princeſs, prior to the entrance of her ſon; who, as ſoon as the introduction had taken place, would accompany the Vicomte and Count Daun to the preſence of his mother

Lady de Solignac, conducted by the Duke, led Leopoldina towards the chamber of her Highneſs. At the door, ſhe pauſed a moment upon the Vicomteſſe's arm. She could not reſtrain the tears which ruſhed from her heart

heart to her eyes, when ſhe recollected how ſhe had laſt ſeen this Princeſs—As the forgetful widow of Koningſtein, the proud wife of Blackenberg, and the cruel mother of her children! To ſee her humbled, to ſee her penitent—the weeping Leopoldina ſtruggled with her feelings, and was led into her preſence.

She ſtarted at the ſight of the withered beauty. Her trembling limbs would hardly ſupport her to her ſide; where dropping down at her feet, unable to ſtand another moment, ſhe wept aloud. Her Highneſs ſtarted up. All the haughtineſs of her mind was not yet ſubdued. Though the ſiſter of Daun, ſhe yet remembered that Leopoldina had once been her ſervant. And with a heightened cheek, and ſomething like inſulted pride, ſhe ſaid in a lofty voice, ſtretching out her hand with the mein of a Sovereign; "Riſe, Madam!—As Lady Leopoldina Daun, I ſhall be happy in your acquaintance! and I am glad of an opportunity to thank you for your care of my ſon!"

Leopoldina roſe. All her tears were diſperſed; and turning on the Princeſs, with an air of ſuch dignity as ſurpriſed her Highneſs, and made her half repent her coldneſs, ſhe ſaid, putting her hand into that of the Vicomteſſe, "I am obliged to your Highneſs; but did I deſerve any gratitude, the friendſhip of this Lady has repaid me a thouſand fold."

Lady de Solignac, ſurpriſed at ſuch towering behaviour in the late humbled mother of Sigiſmund, with difficulty reſtraining her diſpleaſure, ſaid, while the Duke ſtood biting his lip with vexation, "Perhaps your Highneſs forgets that this is the Lady who ſupported your children, when—when—" Her Ladyſhip ſtopped. She might have ſaid, "when you had abandoned them!" But ſhe ceaſed; and her eye told the reſt.

The Princeſs now bluſhed at her conduct; and once more holding out her hand to Leopoldina, who ſtood looking on her with mingled wonder and pity, ſhe ſaid, "I have received your Ladyſhip ſtrangely, ungratefully! but the contentions which are ever in my breaſt, I believe, have bewildered my ſenſes."

Half

Half this apology from the mother of Sigiſmund would have been ſufficient for Leopoldina: and a general ſmile paſſing over their countenances, all was amicable again —

Thus paſſed on the day. The young Koningſtein walked without any aid, to his mother's dreſſing-room. There, with the whole aſſembly of his deareſt friends, amongſt whom were included Hirchfeld and the delighted Lady Emma, the hours rolled away with cheerfulneſs. Sometimes the Vicomteſſe withdrew to viſit her poor ſiſter, who in diſtreſs the moſt boiſterous, becauſe her honours were fading away from her, not for the danger of her huſband, was making the chamber reverberate with her complaints. In vain Lady de Solignac attempted to conſole her. She was ſent away diſguſted, and weary of liſtening to her lamentations for the approaching loſs of that ſtate to which ſhe had ſo lately been raiſed. Her Ladyſhip, though ſhe compaſſionated the Counteſs, did not permit the whimpering of a frivolous mind crying after its toys to ruffle the clear level of her brow, or alloy that pleaſure ſhe felt in the ſociety of thoſe neareſt her heart.

As

As this affectionate groupe were parting for the night, Dr. Heiſter ruſhed into the room, and begged de Solignac immediately to go to the Count, whom he believed to be in the laſt agonies. The Vicomte flew out of the door. At the dreadful ſentence the limbs of Sigiſmund gave way under him, and he ſunk into a ſeat. He dropped his head upon his hands; his heart panting, and his lips parched, he raiſed a mental prayer to the God of Pity to have mercy on the ſoul of ſuch a man.

In half an hour de Solignac returned, pale and breathleſs. He laid his hand on the arm of his adopted ſon: "Come!" ſaid he, "and witneſs the death-bed of a ſinner?" Sigiſmund, ſhaking his head and puſhing him from him, hid his face in his gown. "You muſt not refuſe!" cried his Lordſhip; "he conjures you to forgive him?"—"I do," cried Koningſtein in a voice of horror, and incapable of looking up. "But you muſt tell him ſo yourſelf!" ſaid de Solignac: "it is the requeſt of a dying man!" Sigiſmund, hardly able to ſtand, got up; and waving with his hand for them to take care of his weeping mother, who exclaimed, "I forgive him!" with

with an aſhy countenance, in which all thoſe ghaſtly dreads that he ſuppoſed Blackenberg felt were painted, leaning on the Vicomte, he rather ſtaggered than walked out of the room.

In the veſtibule of the Count's chamber, all the attendants were aſſembled, ſilent and awe-ſtruck. The door was thrown open, and Sigiſmund entered it. At the ſight of Blackenberg, whoſe viſage bore marks that thrilled him with horror, the little ſtrength which he had preſerved fled him; and dropping his head upon the ſhoulder of de Solignac, who ſupported his almoſt ſinking figure in his arms he liſtened to the Count; who in a tone, the ſound of which ran like the ſtreams of death through his veins, ſaid, "Count Koningſtein! I have ſent for you to forgive me." Sigiſmund extended his hand to him, for he could not ſpeak. "And," continued he, "you will pardon me for even the murder of your brother?" Sigiſmund ſhuddered from his ſoul, and haſtily drawing back his arm, ſunk with a deep groan into a chair.

"Then,"

"Then," cried the Count in a voice hardly mortal, "I am doomed to perdition! If frail man cannot forgive me, what am I to expect from God?"—"O Count!" cried Sigiſmund, ſuddenly ſpringing from his ſeat, and flinging himſelf in an agony on his knees beſide him, while his burning eyes and hands were lifted in a wild horror towards Heaven, he cried. "I pardon you all!" and falling back, he lay almoſt ſenſeleſs on the floor. De Solignac looked on him. "Do not take him away?" continued Blackenberg; "let me tell him that I thank him?" The Vicomte gently raiſed him up, and once more he ſtood by the bed.

"My Mother," reſumed he, in a tremulous voice, has ſent you her forgiveneſs."—"May god pardon you as theſe injured beings have done!" cried de Solignac, "and you will die in peace." Blackenberg made no reply. For a ſecond time the convulſions had ſeized him with ſuch violence, that nothing but the wiſh of the expiring wretch could have detained Sigiſmund in ſo terrific a ſcene.

After

After the lapſe of many minutes, though much weakened, he was ſufficiently recovered to deſire his attendants to withdraw; and then turning his palſied head to young Koningſtein, he ſaid, "Carry my thanks to the Princeſs. And for yourſelf, as you have promiſed, be careful of my reputation—as you fulfil that, may you be happy or otherwiſe! Anſwer me that, and, and——O God!" cried he, and throwing himſelf back, his piercing groans ſounded in the ears of the Vicomte like the yells of the damned. "Ah!" thought he to himſelf, "it is the wicked alone who feel the ſting of death! when a good man dies, his is only a tranſlation from grief to joy! he embraces death as his conducter to immortality."

"Count Blackenberg," ſaid Sigiſmund, ſuddenly recollecting himſelf, "there is one requeſt I have to make to you; comply with that, and I will do all you wiſh. Give an order to me, before the prieſt of the Holy Virgin, who is in the ante-chamber, that I may have no obſtacle in taking Roſamund Petrie from his convent?" Blackenberg made no reply but by moans ſtill more dreadful than before.

fore. "Then ſhe is dead?" exclaimed Koningſtein. The Count yet was ſilent. "If ſo?" aſked he in a voice ſo full of energetic ſorrow, that the Vicomte wondered; "tell me where ſhe is buried? It will be ſome pleaſure to ſee her grave!"—"Do not, my ſon!" cried de Solignac, as Sigiſmund ſunk into a ſeat, "do not afflict yourſelf for her loſs? Let us rather be grateful that Heaven took her to itſelf! Had ſhe lived a lunatic——"—"Ceaſe! ceaſe!" cried he, in a ſolemn and heart-broken voice.

For an inſtant the penetrating murmurs of the Count were huſhed. He raiſed himſelf on his elbow; and gazing for an inſtant on the fixed features of him who had ſo generouſly forgiven him, he took a leathern caſe from under his pillow; and ſtretching out his arm to Sigiſmund, he ſaid, "Take this, Koningſtein: it contains keys: beneath the eaſtern cellars of the Caſtle you will find a door which one of theſe can open: that will lead you to yet remoter vaults: in one of thoſe you may ſee the remains of Roſamund: to give them the rights of ſepulchre may afford you ſome conſolation." That ſhe muſt be by this time

time ſtarved to death, he firmly believed: but that he had given ſome ſatisfaction to the man who had ſought to comfort him, felt like ſomething pleaſing in his boſom. The ſtedfaſt eyes of Sigiſmund were fixed upon the keys which he now held. "What!" cried de Solignac amazed, "if this unfortunate girl died in the convent, why was ſhe not buried there?" Unprepared for this queſtion, the almoſt exhauſted ſpirit of Blackenberg knew not what to ſay. Again he laid himſelf down on his bed: again all the fiends of guilt tugged at his heart-ſtrings: but yet he would not ſacrifice the little ſeeming innocence he held, to a repentance, the efficacy of which he doubted: for, alas! he felt that no ſorrow for his crimes was in his breaſt, but that which aroſe from the maddening terrors of a myſterious futurity.

The Vicomte repeated his queſtion, little imagining the tortures it occaſioned to the poor ſtruggling culprit before him. At laſt, in a voice hardly to be heard, and interrupted by his ſhortening breath, he ſaid, "Swear to me never again to aſk a queſtion relative to this ſubject of any one; not even of the Religieux

ligieux of the convent; for ſo I was ſworn." Hardly knowing what they ſaid, ſo great was their anxiety to be told the cauſe of ſuch indignity, they both ſwore. "Then," cried Blackenberg, "ſhe was a ſuicide: as ſuch ſhe was denied conſecrated ground; and ſooner than her body ſhould be ſpiked on the highway, I ordered it to be conveyed in ſecrecy to the cells beneath the Caſtle, where it now is."

At this horrible information, Sigiſmund leaped from his ſeat, and darted out of the room: he ruſhed along the gallery; and, flinging himſelf on his own bed, wept without ceaſing. The pangs which he felt, on the conviction that Roſamund, the kind, the tender Roſamund, was indeed no more! that ſhe was torn from receiving his moſt animated gratitude! a goal on which, in the midſt of all his miſeries, he had always fixed his eye! But this was wreſted from him: ſhe was dead! and that ſhe had died by her own hand, in conſequence of that phrenzy which her ſorrow for his family had produced, almoſt bereft him of his ſenſes: and, weeping and ſighing, he lay extended on the bed, till his emotions aroſe to a ſickneſs like the feelings of diſſolving nature.

In

In half an hour the Vicomte entered: he would have ſat down beſide him, and have related the remainder of his converſation with Blackenberg; but as he began to ſpeak, "I wiſh to ſleep," ſaid Sigiſmund in a voice of affected tranquillity. "Then I ſhall ſay good night, my love!" replied his Lordſhip: "I will take care that you ſhall not be diſturbed."—"Thank you, my Lord!" returned he liſtening with a ſenſation of delight to the door as it cloſed after him.

CHAP. X.

"And if a tear that ſpeaks regret
"Of happier times, appear;
"A glimpſe of joy, that we have met,
"Shall ſhine, and dry the tear." COWPER.

HOUR paſſed on hour. The wounded heart of Sigiſmund bled in his boſom: the boiling of his blood made the gaſhes of Blackenberg's ſword burn like a corroding flame: but he felt it not, when compared with the tortures within him. Unable to bear it longer with patience, he jumped up, and determined immediately to fly to the vaults in which ſhe lay, and to behold the faded remains of what was once ſo amiable, ſo benevolent.

He twiſted his long dreſſing-gown tightly around him; and catching up his lamp, holding yet thoſe precious keys in his hand, and regardleſs of the danger to himſelf of entering thoſe damp paſſages at a time ſo perilous to his recovery; he ſtole down the grand ſtair-caſe, croſſed the ſervants' halls, one of which led into the cellars: theſe he entered: after much ſearching about, he at laſt diſcovered a ſloping door behind a large butt of wine: he found a key that fitted its padlock in a moment; and he haſtened down its mouldering ſteps with a quickneſs and trepidation that every inſtant menaced his ſafety. An almoſt endleſs paſſage was now before him: he flew along it; and at length ſtopped at another door: he had only one more key left; he applied it to the lock; it opened; but a portcullis prevented his farther proceeding; trembling leſt his advancing was now at an end, he examined it, and the next moment undrew the large bolts, raiſed it, and ſtood in a vaſt dripping dungeon.

His heart pauſed. Rolling his eyes anxiouſly around, he held up his lamp; when, at the farther corner, there appeared ſomething of an aſhy colour.—The laſt bed of the poor ſuicide!—

ſuicide!—Trembling from head to foot, with the damps of death pouring down his limbs, he advanced to the ſpot: covering his eyes with his hand, while he ſet down his lamp, that they might reſt a little before they looked on a ſight that he felt would blaſt them: he heſitated a moment; then ſhuddering, he drew aſide his head, and beheld—not a dead corpſe, but the pale form of a lovely young creature; who, at the view of him, raiſed herſelf gently on her arm; and fixing her awe-ſtruck eyes on him with an expreſſion of ſublime adoration, gazed on him in ſilence.

Sigiſmund hung over her, breathleſs and amazed, as if fearful that his leaſt motion would awake him from the belief of what he ſaw: at laſt, running over the expreſſive beauties of her touching countenance, he dropped ſuddenly on his knees; and catching her hand, ſnatched it eagerly to his lips: ſhe ſhrieked at the action; and fell almoſt lifeleſs on her pillow. Sigiſmund felt that hand, not as the cold marble of the dead, but ſoft and glowing; when, claſping the other alſo, he drew her up towards him; and ſtraining her cloſe to his grateful breaſt, while ſhe opened

her aſtoniſhed eyes, and ſtruggled to be extricated, he exclaimed, "Roſamund! deareſt of all earthly beings! I come to releaſe you!"

He withdrew his arms; and whilſt ſhe hardly ſupported her ſurpriſed frame againſt the top of the mattraſs, he continued, "O! be not thus alarmed! I thought to have found you dead! and to find you thus!—my joy, my gratitude—Yes, Roſamund! I am Sigiſmund; one of that unhappy family whoſe ſufferings have reduced you to this!" The tears of Roſamund poured from her eyes: bending her head on the arm of that hand which yet graſped hers, ſhe wept till her tears gave her leave to ſpeak; but ſtill ſhe was ſilent. Sigiſmund, with a bounding heart, went on: "Leopoldina is in the Caſtle; the Duke of Deux-ponts; indeed all thoſe who love you! Let me lead you to them? And, O Roſamund! believe that what I feel—!" he ſtopped; and, dropping his cheek upon her bent head, was alſo ſilent.

She now haſtily raiſed herſelf; and, ſhaking away her tears, ſaid in a voice whoſe melting tones ran in a thouſand delicious runnels through his

his breaſt, " I am ſo bewildered!—You are ſo like that angelic ſpirit—that, that—but I will follow you to Leopoldina."

Having caſt herſelf on her bed without taking off her cloaths, which is ſo often the practice of the unhappy, ſhe leaned on the ſhoulder of Sigiſmund, and roſe without farther heſitation. Her ſlight figure, much weakened by the late anxiety of her mind, could ſcarcely ſuſtain itſelf; as ſhe almoſt ſunk down again, he caſt his arm around her waiſt, and lifting his lamp, led her out, ſlowly and with trepidation. As he moved, he dwelt, with his whole ſoul in his eyes, upon the grace of that yielding form, upon the entrancing beauty of that down-caſt countenance; and looked with redoubled anxiety on a broad white fillet which completely concealed the whole of her forehead.

Thus he carefully conducted her through the extenſive ſubterraneous dungeon, till they arrived in the apartments of the Caſtle, and from them into his own chamber. She ſunk exhauſted and almoſt fainting upon a chair. He made her ſwallow ſome water, which a little revived her exhauſted ſpirits; and placing himſelf

her aſtoniſhed eyes, and ſtruggled to be extricated, he exclaimed, "Roſamund! deareſt of all earthly beings! I come to releaſe you!"

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himſelf beſide her after ſhe had drunk it, though he would rather have fallen at her feet, he gently retained her hand as ſhe returned the glaſs; and inquired, in a voice where but half the tenderneſs of his heart was conveyed, how ſhe felt herſelf?

"I ſhall be well," replied ſhe, putting her other hand to her forehead, "when I am more compoſed; but I now hardly believe what I ſee and hear. Let me ſpeak to Leopoldina?" "Certainly," anſwered he, "but I will not quit you till I leave you with her." He haſtily took a ſheet of paper, and ſcrawled rather than wrote:

"Come! deareſt Madam! Come to my room immediately. I have found our adored Roſamund."

He ſprang acroſs the paſſage, and abruptly awakening Dr. Heiſter, begged him directly to take that to the chamber of Lady Leopoldina, and to ſee it given to her that inſtant. Unable to account for the appearance of the young Koningſtein at this hour of the night ready dreſſed, and in ſuch an ecſtacy of manner,

and

and impetuoſity of giving his commands; a thing very unuſual with him, for in ſuch a hurry was he, that he was barely civil; in vain Heiſter aſked him queſtions; his only reply was, "Haſte! fly! Do not wait a moment!" and then darting out of the room, he as haſtily returned into his own.

The ſurpriſed ſurgeon was little better pleaſed with his reception by Leopoldina. For the moment ſhe had thrown over her a morning robe, and had read the letter, ſhe ruſhed paſt him and flew like lightning down the gallery. He followed, and entering the room with her at the ſame inſtant, to his great amazement, beheld the head of the moſt beautiful young woman he had ever ſeen reſting upon her arm on the table; while his patient ſat oppoſite to her, with his hands claſped, and gazing on her as if he dreaded every inſtant that ſhe would vaniſh from his ſight.

At the entrance of Leopoldina, ſhe ſtarted up, and would have flown to her Ladyſhip; but ſhe darted forward and catching her before ſhe had half riſen from her chair, ſtrained

ed her to her boſom. A ſcene of joy and rapture now enſued; and Sigiſmund knelt at the ſide of Roſamund, whilſt ſhe hung weeping over the neck of her friend. When they became more compoſed, Leopoldina ſat holding the hand of the lovely girl in hers, looking in her face with all the affection of her feelings: at laſt ſhe ſaid, "But, Roſamund, why is that fillet-bound round your head?—Have you hurt it?"—"What? have you forgotten," returned ſhe, "the cut which I received when Count Blackenberg threw me againſt the ſtove? It would not have remained ſo long, but ſome time ago, trying to eſcape from my frightful priſon, I fell down a flight of ſtone ſteps, and when I awoke from my ſwoon, and had crawled back to my dungeon; I found my face covered with blood, for I had ſtruck it againſt the ſtairs, and the wound opened afreſh."

"Your dungeon!" aſked Leopoldina, in a voice of conſternation. "Yes," replied Roſamund, "did you not know that by Blackenberg's orders I was carried away in my ſleep to the remote vaults which are hidden beneath the Caſtle? There I exiſted in a ſtate

ſtate of mind not to be deſcribed. He told me I was confined for life. And all this was done becauſe I perſiſted in affirming that I knew he was a murderer." The mute head of Sigiſmund reſted on his hand, while ſhe continued:

" But for ſeveral days paſt I thought that I was doomed to die for want. Freidrach, my uſual attendant, never came near me.—The anxiety which ſucceeded this dread, though I had yet plenty of proviſions to ſupport me another week, added to the illneſs which I caught in conſequence of the damps of the dungeon, have reduced me to the poor feeble being which you now behold."—" Deareſt Roſamund!" cried Leopoldina, catching her to her breaſt, " there have been no crimes too deep for the perpetration of the miſerable Count! But you muſt be exhauſted? therefore, with our Koningſtein's permiſſion, I will take you to my room, where you may ſeek ſome reſt; and to-morrow morning you muſt tell me how he happened to diſcover you?" At theſe words Sigiſmund roſe from his chair, and reſpectfully bowing, for his heart was too oppreſſed to ſpeak, he aſſiſted her Ladyſhip

Ladyſhip to lead the trembling Roſamund to the door of her chamber, where he left them, and returned to his own.

Dr. Heiſter had withdrawn the moment he perceived a ſtrange lady in Sigiſmund's room; but as he heard his ſtep as he approached it again, he came out of his apartment, and taking him by the hand, ſaid, "My dear young Count, whatever was the cauſe of that lovely creature being in your room to-night, and of the ſucceeding turbulence of your feelings, if you do not attend a little to my advice I will not anſwer for your life?—My God, how your pulſe beats! This rapid ruſhing of your blood is deſtruction to your ſafety!"—"Then what am I to do to inſure it? aſked his auditor, impatient at the interruption. "Swallow this directly," anſwered he, putting a mild opiate into his hand, "and go to bed immediately."—"Very well," replied the other, taking it, and hardly ſenſible of what he ſaid. "Nay, but promiſe me on your honour?" cried Heiſter, ſeeing his abſtraction and withholding him. "I do, upon my honour!" cried Sigiſmund; when diſengaging himſelf, he darted into his own room, and

and flinging the door after him, in caſe he ſhould forget, inſtantly ſwallowed the potion.

He then haſtily threw off his clothes, and leaped into bed, where he might more freely enjoy the luxury of his own thoughts. He dwelt upon the various villainies of the Count; upon the beauties of Roſamund, the lovelineſs of her mind, the accumulated ſufferings which ſhe had endured for his family, for himſelf, till his heart ſwelled ready to burſt his boſom; he then ſunk to ſleep on the pillow wet with his tears.

The next morning Sigiſmund was arouſed from his ſweet ſlumber and delightful dreams, by the loudeſt ſhrieks echoing through the Caſtle; and the next moment the half-cloſed door bounced open, and the lifeleſs form of Roſamund fell proſtrate into the room. He haſtily ſprang out of bed, and flung his night-gown around him. Leopoldina, ſupported by the Vicomte and Daun, and followed by the Duke, were now in the gallery.—Sigiſmund was already by the ſide of Roſamund, ſprinkling her face with water, and

marking, with a quivering ſpirit, the ſhort breathings of her motionleſs form. Leopoldina threw herſelf ſhuddering into a chair, calling, in all the phrenzy of diſtraction, on the names of Koningſtein and Xavier. The ſoul of the young Count writhed in every feeling. Roſamund now opened her eyes: ſurrendering her into the care of the Duke, he flew to Leopoldina; and folding his arms about her, as ſhe flung her burning head upon his ſhoulder, in a voice of terror he demanded what was the matter? Raiſing herſelf, ſhe firmly graſped his hand, and in a ſolemn and ſuppreſſed tone, ſaid, "your enemy is now before his God. He begged the ſight of Roſamund, and fixing his eyes on her, he fell into ſuch horrors!—and died."

"Then may God pardon him!" cried Sigiſmund, looking up; and turning away, he entered his cloſet for a few minutes; where, bending on his knees before the throne of juſtice and mercy, his lips did not move, but his ſoul converſed with Heaven: he roſe with a ſublime ſerenity reſting on his heart; and putting on him the remainder of his clothes, opened the door to rejoin his friends in the chamber.

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They were gone; but Hirchfeld was there: as they withdrew, he had entered. At the ſight of Sigiſmund, he held to him his hand: "God hath been your avenger!" ſaid he; "may you, dear Koningſtein, be as happy as my wiſhes are ſincere!" Sigiſmund preſſed him to his breaſt: "Yes," continued the impetuous Rhinelander, "you have ſeen your triumph over all your enemies! The Ducheſs has fled to Ruſſia, fearing there is no reſpect for her in this empire: Blackenberg is dead: and that little inſolent, Lady Louiſe, is going to remove to-day, with the reſt of the tireſome gueſts, who are all aſſembled below in the breakfaſt-room, prior to their ſetting off at noon for their ſeveral homes. Few like to inhabit the houſe of mourning!"—"I ſhall be glad when we are releaſed from their burthen," returned Sigiſmund; and leaning on his friend's arm, he haſtened towards the dreſſing-room of the Vicomteſſe.

Her Ladyſhip, claſping him to her boſom, whilſt ſhe preſſed her tearful cheek to his, led him into the apartment. All were there but his mother; the horror of her emotions confined her yet to her bed: the intereſting Ro-

ſamund lay extended on the ſofa, ſupported by Lady Emma and Leopoldina; the amiable Duke was kneeling by her ſide, and exhorting her in the animated language of fraternal affection, to compoſe her emotions to accompliſh the happineſs of thoſe who ſo warmly valued hers: at the ſight of Sigiſmund he roſe, and putting the hand which he had ſo long graſped into that of the young Count's, he whiſpered to him; "ſo I beſtow into your poſſeſſion the loveliest as the moſt ineſtimable of women." The eloquent blood of Sigiſmund ſuffuſed his whole face; but only preſſing the hand which was given to him, he turned to Lady Leopoldina, and begged that ſhe would ſummon his ſurgeon to the aid of their dear friend, as he feared her health and the wound in her forehead had been too long neglected: but on this ſubject Dr. Heiſter himſelf ſatisfied him, and adviſed the whole company to ſeparate for a few hours, that each might have time to collect their ſcattered thoughts.

As Sigiſmund was returning to his own room, he met Lady Louiſe followed by her women, all ready habited for travelling, haſtening along the gallery: at the firſt glance of his

his figure ſhe turned away her face, and was hurrying paſt him; but he, bowing, ſaid in a voice of real concern; for notwithſtanding her flagrant coquetry, the power of her beauty ſoftened his diſguſt into pity: he gently took her hand, and ſaid, "Are you going Lady Louiſe?"—"I am," anſwered ſhe; "this is no place for me: if I ſtay I ſhall be doubly wretched." "Certainly it is a ſcene of horror!" replied he with a ſincere ſigh; "but in future, when the memory of all theſe terrors have paſſed away, if your Ladyſhip will honour the Vicomteſſe and this Caſtle, of which I am now the maſter, with your preſence, I ſhall conceive myſelf happy."—"No, my Lord!" ſaid ſhe in a haughty accent, "my maid here, overheard one of the ſervants tell Count Blackenberg that you had brought one Roſamund into the Caſtle; that Roſamund whom Blackenberg demanded to ſee, and the ſight of whom killed him! and this Roſamund, the Duke's valet tells me, is to be your wife: do you think that I will viſit a murdereſs?"

"On this head, my dear Madam!" cried Sigiſmund with trepidation, "you may be at eaſe: the lovely Roſamund is no murdereſs:

it was the conſcience of the unhappy Count that killed him, not her looks: and as for her being my wife, I—I—would give half my exiſtence to purchaſe ſo invaluable a treaſure!" "You ſhall never ſee me more!" cried her Ladyſhip, burſting into tears, and flying down the gallery. He ſtood motionleſs on the ſpot: ſhe lingered a moment at the top of the ſtairs, and looking back; before ſhe had deſcended the firſt ſtep he was again at her ſide: "Lady Louiſe!" ſaid he' "from what cauſe this great indignation againſt me ariſes I cannot ſay; but let me aſſure you that my regard for your happineſs is unfeigned: may God give into your poſſeſſion a heart that will appreciate your perſonal graces, and convince you that the beauties of a frank and artleſs mind are yet more ineſtimable! When we again meet, may Lady Louiſe look on me as her real friend!"— He put her hand reſpectfully to his lips; and without anſwering ſhe ruſhed down the ſtairs, followed by her attendants.

The mere viſitors had all quitted Koningſtein that morning; and that day, with ſeveral more, paſſed on heavily, becauſe the ſhadow of death yet hung over the Caſtle. Unable

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to bear the ſolemnity of ſo ſad a ſcene as the burial of the Count, the diſtreſsful Counteſs, overwhelmed with the burſting of her *high-blown* pride, ſet off with a large retinue, as the laſt relics of her expiring grandeur, to immure her diſappointed vanity within the walls of the nunnery of St. Thereſa at Preſburg.

The broken-ſpirited Princeſs, found her ſoul equally diſturbed by a too frequent commerce with a world from which ſhe had ſo long been driven: but that ſhe might yet be near her only ſon, and ſee him ſometimes, the morning before the evening of the funeral, ſhe was conducted by the Vicomteſſe and Lady Emma, who was now affianced to Hirchfeld, to the monaſtery of the nuns of the Holy Virgin.

According to the extorted vow which the Vicomte had made in Sigiſmund's name to the dying Blackenberg in that laſt conference with him, and the ſubſtance of which the agitated young Koningſtein could not then hear, his Lordſhip now informed him, that not only he muſt attend the interment of his perſecutor, but, to adhere with honour to his promiſe,

promiſe, Roſamund muſt alſo accompany him; "for," ſaid he, "whom did that wretched man more deeply injure than herſelf!"—"But why?" aſked Sigiſmund; "why did he make ſuch a requeſt? what benefit can it be to his ſoul that our hearts ſhould be torn with horror by attending his laſt remains to their tomb?"—"None," replied de Solignac: "he demanded your appearance as mourners at his funeral, that by its magnificence and your preſence all reports might be invalidated which are circulating to his diſhonour."—"O how wary!" ejaculated Sigiſmund; had he been but at half the pains to retain his virtue, as he has to conceal thoſe vices which he nurtured, what a man might he have been! how differently would he have died! but I have done: I will abide by what you have promiſed for myſelf; but how to aſk the dear Roſamund!"—"Leave that to the Vicomteſſe," interrupted he; "I will commiſſion her to make the requeſt, while you prepare yourſelf for the awful ſcene that is to take place to night."

So ſtrange a demand, though it was enforced both by Lady de Solignac and Lady Leopoldina,

Leopoldina, was yet refuſed by the agitated Roſamund. "Surely my attendance cannot be promiſed," replied ſhe "when he conſidered me already as dead!"—"That is nothing," anſwered the Vicomteſſe; "the Count begged of my Lord to ſwear to him, that every one who was in the Caſtle at the time of his interment, who conceived that he had been their enemy, ſhould poſitively appears a mourners at his funeral, that the ſeeming honours paid to his laſt remains might eſtabliſh the rectitude of his character through the empire:"—"And muſt the young Koningſtein," aſked ſhe in a voice of horror, "muſt he appear to weep over the corpſe of the man who murdered his brother?"—"Yes," anſwered Leopoldina, "ſo noble is his heart, that to ſatisfy the wiſh of an expiring ſinner, and to ſeal by the agony of his own ſoul the pardon he beſtowed on his injurer, he will even attend him to that grave wherein the remains of that brother reſts."—"Then," cried Roſamund, ſtarting up and wringing her hands with the enthuſiaſm of the moment, "there is no agony that he muſt ſuffer that I would not ſhare!" As ſhe ended, the conviction of what ſhe had uttered

uttered flaſhed upon her, and flinging her bluſhing face on the boſom of Leopoldina, received her warm kiſſes on her cheek, while the Vicomteſſe caſting her arms around her, in the midſt of the moſt animated embraces, exclaimed, "Yes, you muſt be my daughter, the wife of my adored boy!"

At laſt evening cloſed in: and the awful proceſſion prepared; the Vicomte, dreſſed in the habiliments of mourning, entered the chamber of the Vicomteſſe, where the ſickening Roſamund ſtood ready for the dreadful moment. He led her out: when placing her almoſt ſinking form between the upholding arms of Leopoldina and Lady de Solignac; he, with Hirchfeld, joined Sigiſmund, who ſtood gazing on the intereſting girl, with ſenſations in his breaſt that ſoftened the dark melancholy which ſurrounded him. The torches moved on: the mutes: the body of the moſt wicked of men, lying lifeleſs beneath the ſuperb pall which covered it, was borne along. The mourners followed. The vaſſals and the church-men, parted to let the proceſſion paſs; and as the blaze of the lights lit up the long aiſles of the chapel; and the organ

organ and the choriſters raiſed the firſt requiem to the ſpirit of the departed, the heart of Sigiſmund ſeemed to ſtand ſtill.—The prieſts moved on. The ſepulchre was thrown open; and bending his heavy eyes he followed the corpſe through the chambers of death. It was lowered into a deeper vault; and the prayers of righteouſneſs were breathed over it. "*Duſt to duſt! Aſhes to aſhes!*" The door dropped; and Sigiſmund, haſtily turning round, found himſelf near the catacomb of his father. The coffin of Xavier ſtood at his right hand; he flung himſelf on it, and groaned aloud. The half-ſuppreſſed cries of Roſamund now ſtruck upon his ear: he ſtarted up, and breaking through the crowd, caſt his arms around her, and exclaimed in a voice of mingled agony and tenderneſs, "O Roſamund! my ſoul's deareſt love! thou, thou muſt be to me as father, as brother, as every thing!" She raiſed her head from the boſom of the weeping Leopoldina, and whilſt ſhe let it ſink on his breaſt, ſaid in a tone hardly to be heard, "Here my heart would reſt for ever!"

THE END.

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